Dr. M. Sa'īd Ramāḍan al-Būṭī

The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography

&

A Brief History of the Rightly Guided Caliphate

Translated by
Nancy Roberts

Revised by
Anas al-Rifā'i

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Horizons of Knowledge

The Jurisprudence

Of the Prophetic Biography

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The Jurisprudence of the prophetic Biography

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In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
The Most Merciful

To God be praise commensurate with His blessings

And with the increase which He bestows.

Our Lord, praise belongs to You

for the Majesty of Your Being and the Greatness of Your Power.

May blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad

And upon all his descendents and Companions, and

may God grant us guidance along

His Straight Path.

I would like to assure my readers, both Arabs and non-Arabs, of the reliability and accuracy of this translation. Hence, it is this rendering, and no other, which should be recognized as the legitimate, "certified" English translation of my book, The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography. What leads me to issue such a warning is that the reader may encounter various other translations of the same work which fail to communicate faithfully the book's actual message and intent but, rather, aim to achieve material gain at the expense of exactitude and academic integrity.

Meanwhile, we ask God Almighty to enable us to do all things solely for His good pleasure.

Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti

Damascus, 12 Rajab, 1421 A.H., 10 October, 2000

I would like to extend special thanks to Sheikh Jamal al-Dhahabi, Imam of the Islamic Society of Delaware, for his invaluable assistance in the process of preparing the revised edition of The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography.

Nancy Roberts

Amman, Jordan

November, 2006

Introduction to the New Edition

God has granted a wider circulation and popularity to the present work than He has to any other book I have had the fortune to write and publish. The reason for this, I am certain, is the approach which I have taken to the writing of the prophetic biography, an approach which ensures the correction of the errors, indeed, distortions to which so many modern writers have fallen prey, especially those who operate on the basis of the dubious modern catch phrase, "a contemporary reading." This book contains a discussion of such errors and the factors which have led to them. In an important introductory chapter which I added to one of the most recent editions of the work, entitled, "The Prophetic Biography: How Its Study Has Evolved, and How It Must Be Understood Today," I discuss the ordered approach which must be followed when writing the prophetic biography and I compare this approach to other schools and methods.

Many are those who have analyzed the life of the Prophet of God (pbuh) in their writings, presenting it as an exemplar of human greatness, as it were, a greatness which characterized many of the leaders and other men who preceded and followed him. Many are those who have insisted upon giving people to understand that the Islamic conquest led by the Prophet of God (pbuh) was nothing more than a revolution of the economic Left against an extremist Right! Many also are those who have deluded, or attempted to delude, people into believing that the ulterior motive which led the Prophet of God and those with him to do what they did consisted in the desire to transfer leadership and sovereignty from the hands of non-Arabs to those of the Arabs. To achieve this end, writers have been recruited and funds dispersed; even I myself was once asked, directly and publicly, to follow this path and to write a biography of the Prophet of God in a manner which would serve these ends.

However, experience has demonstrated that the weaving of fabricated conceptions is incapable of turning truth into falsehood or falsehood into truth. Hence, the clouds blown in by such writings, dense though they once were, have dissipated, and the bright sun of the truth has broken through once again. People in general and intellectuals in particular have retained their certainty that the greatness of the Messenger of God was first and foremost a fruit of his prophethood, and only secondarily a product of his humanity; that the conquest which took place at his hands was the execution of a divine command rather than a quest for wealth; that sovereignty over this earth, as we were taught by the Messenger of God, belongs to human beings in their humanity, that is, in their capacity as God's vicegerents and as those who have been exalted and dignified by God's decree; and that the disparities which exist among people within the framework of this sovereignty are based solely on their degree of sanctity and their good works, not on any of the other distinctions of which some persons might boast.

Hence, it should come as no surprise that the corrections I have offered to such errors or distortions have been given such an enthusiastic reception. The warm welcome which has been afforded this book is due to one cause alone, namely, people's innate attachment to truth, wherever it appears and whoever its proponents happen to be, and conversely, their aversion to falsehood, whatever the charms it may display or the finery with which it is adorned. Perhaps this is part of the meaning conveyed by the words of Almighty God, "They want to extinguish God's (guiding) light with their mouths; but God will not allow except that His light should be perfected even though the disbelievers dislike (it)" (Qur'an 9: 32).

It is plainly evident that the minds of most people are tending today toward a search for the truth – the pure, unblemished truth, unconstrained by tendentiousness and preconceived notions. People have suffered grave afflictions as a result of tampering with the facts and attempts to subject them to the rule of whims, personal interests, and passions. This may be one of the latent causes behind the Islamic awakening which we have been witnessing on all levels and among all sectors of society.

The present edition is distingushed from earlier ones by a seventh section which contains a brief presentation of the rightly guided caliphate. In this additional section, I have adopted the same method as that followed in the rest of the book; hence, after a discussion of the life of each caliph and the most significant events which occurred during his era, I point out the lessons and morals which may be gleaned therefrom. In so doing, I hope to have succeeded in making this book an adequate resource for the study of both the biography of God's Prophet (pbuh) and those of his rightly guided caliphs. The purpose of this analysis is to enable readers to understand the juristic implications and principles contained in these biographies.

Credit for whatever success we have achieved goes, firstly and lastly, to God alone. Now that He has honored me with such an accomplishment, all I ask of God Almighty is that He increase the blessings He has already bestowed by honoring me with the capacity to be fully devoted to His gracious Being, and by cleansing my heart of any other motive or purpose.

I know with a certainty that admits of no doubt that all affairs are in the hands of God alone, and that no power or strength can operate but through His agency.

Damascus, 15 Ramadan, 1411 A.H., 1 April, 1991

Introduction to the Second Edition

After expanding many sections and revising some of the chapters, I am presenting this second edition of The Jurisprudence of the Biography of The Prophet Muhammad to those who are concerned with the study of the life of the Chosen One (pbuh) and who wish to acquaint themselves with the juristic implications of his biography and the lessons and principles to be gained therefrom. In so doing, it is my hope that the book will come a bit closer to perfection, knowing, of course, that absolute perfection is an unattainable goal, while infallibility is a plane of existence which no one can hope to reach, except, perhaps, those upon whom God has bestowed this honor. Such infallibility is a distinction which has been granted to the prophets alone, in order to enable people to discern the difference between those who exercise their minds in the contemplation and analysis of difficult matters, and those who, in addition to what God has given them by way of superior intelligence and enlightened understanding, have been guided to the truth concerning such questions by means of revelation and inspiration.

When the first edition of this book appeared, I was not expecting it to sell out in such a short period of time or to be given the warm reception with which it was met in the various Arab and Islamic countries. I was aware, however, that in my writing of the prophetic biography and in my related commentary, I had followed an approach which would be capable of correcting the errors of many of those who had written on this topic in modern times. This approach reveals the fallacies which were, and still are, being spread by the pens of numerous writers, including both Orientalists and disciples of the West. Such errors and fallacies have been nurtured, reinforced, and propagated by a particular school of thought which emerged in the late 19th Century, and whose influence has endured to the present.

Based on the praise I received from readers for the manner in which I wrote these chapters, I realized that this school of thought no longer deceived any but a very few people, who are still under the spell of the school's name and those of its founders and proponents. I also realized that the obvious facts of the life of the Chosen One (pbuh) continue to shine forth; free minds continue to be receptive to them and convinced of their validity, unsatisfied with any interpretation or analysis which aims to distort or manipulate them.

Most researchers and thinkers are aware that one of the most important reasons for the establishment of this school at the time of its inception was the fact that many Muslim Arab minds were dazzled by the scientific renaissance in Europe. Spellbound with events in Europe, such people mistakenly imagined that all Muslims needed to do in order to experience a similar reawakening would be to understand Islam in their own countries as Christianity had been understood in Europe. In other words, all they needed to do was to subject the facts of Islam having to do with the unseen and the miraculous to the discoveries of the physical sciences. This, in turn, would mean not believing in anything unseen unless it were also comprehensible in scientific terms, or accepting any miracle not supported by some modern discovery or invention. If they did this – or so they believed – they would enter upon a revival the likes of Europe's in the sciences and the arts.

It was on this basis that the leaders of this school initiated what they claimed to be "religious reform", even though sound religion has never been corrupted such that it would need reform or reformers! One manifestation of this "reform" was the appearance of the first attempt to subject the life of the Apostle (pbuh) to an analysis which reflected unthinking submission to the European mindset, and under the

banner of what was referred to as "modern science." Husayn Haykal's book, The Life of Muhammad was the pioneering experiment in this sphere. Its author declared that he did not wish to understand the life of Muhammad (pbuh) in any way which would conflict with what is mandated by "science." Hence, he claimed, there were no supernatural elements or miracles in his life (pbuh); rather, the only miracle which one could attribute to him (pbuh) is the Qur'an, and the Qur'an alone. In this connection, the author cited the following line from al-Busiri's ode to the Prophet (pbuh):

He tried us with nothing that would weary the mind,

Thereby protecting us from confusion and doubt.

However, he forgot to cite the following line from the self-same poem:

The trees fell prostrate in response to his call,

Walking toward him on legs without feet.

Shaykh al-Maraghi, head of Al-Azhar University at that time, extolled the book and pronounced his blessing on this pioneering step. Muhammad Farid Wajdi also published a series of articles in which he called for an understanding of Islam and the prophetic biography based on "science." What he meant by "the path of science" was the refusal of the mind to admit the possibility of the unseen, the supernatural or the miraculous, even if the communications related thereto are based on truthful, well-attested reports recorded in the Qur'an or the Sunnah, as if science required the denial of anything which is not perceived by one's senses!

The British occupiers of Egypt at that time exploited this new understanding of Islam on the part of a certain group of leading thinkers and writers in order to weaken the religious inclinations in Muslims' hearts. (And what religious inclination could possibly survive in the heart of someone who denies the very notion of the miraculous in the realm of religion? Is religion anything other than the miracle of divine revelation to God's messengers and prophets?) In this way, imperialist education began to drive a wedge between Muslims and their Islamic way of life and thought, the wedge being another approach with nothing to say for itself but that it was a centuries-old method of European origin!

As time passed, however, it became apparent to every fair-minded researcher that this school had nothing to do with free intellectual thought or impartial academic research. Rather, it was a reaction on the part of a certain group of Muslims to a sense of weakness and awe at others' accomplishments. Due to particular circumstances in which they found themselves, such individuals were now disposed to learn about European life, as a result of which they were enticed by its outer trappings and the pleasures it had to offer. Allowing their whims and desires to dominate their minds, they contrived a school of thought which, to all outward appearances, was one of "religious reform" while, in actual fact, it was nothing but an expression of emotional subordination and intellectual acquiescence in the face of the Western renaissance.

It likewise became apparent to every researcher -- contrary to what the leaders and proponents of this school had imagined or given others to imagine -- that it had done nothing to help them achieve a scientific awakening like that witnessed in Europe. The only fruit reaped by this "religious reform" was the loss of two realities at once: neither did they preserve their religious truth, nor did they achieve a scientific awakening.

For this reason, the most important aim I hope to achieve through this book is to do away with whatever still remains of the aforementioned school of thought. No Muslim should attempt for a single moment to understand the life of the Apostle of God (pbuh) as that of a great genius, a dignified leader, or a worldly wise "fox". Such an attempt is nothing but willfulness or a tampering with the major events with which the life of Muhammad (pbuh) was filled, and which demonstrate that he (pbuh) possessed all the qualities of nobility and of moral, mental, and psychological perfection. However, all of this arose from a single,

dominant reality in his life, namely, that he was a prophet sent by Almighty God. It is futile to place the branches where the root once was while ignoring the fact that the root still exists! In any case, the only appropriate response to such an attempt is to draw people's attention back to the root, and to the root alone.

So long as we acknowledge that the Prophet (pbuh) has a biography on the basis of which we can seek to understand his life, then no Muslim must imagine that his only miracle was the Qur'an. If, on the other hand, we deny that the Prophet (pbuh) even has such a biography, then we must also deny the miracle of the Qur'an, since the various miracles associated with the Apostle of God (pbuh) have reached us through the same sources from which we learn of the miracle of the Qur'an itself. A researcher who sets out to interpret some things metaphorically and to interpret others literally based on his personal desires or aims only debases himself in an attempt to concoct his own brand of inquiry and understanding; no one with any respect for his own intellect would engage in such a practice.

The satisfaction and enthusiasm with which readers have received this work of mine is the greatest proof of the fact that all the time and effort spent and all the exhaustive, successive writings that have been circulated by ill-willed individuals and the professional agents of the intellectual invasion being launched by Orientalists, "Occidentalists", and their uninstructed partisans can do nothing whatsoever to transform truth into falsehood or falsehood into truth. They also serve to demonstrate that intellectual truth cannot be destroyed, for even if some may succeed in deceiving others or in obscuring the truth, such success will be short-lived; eventually, deception and obfuscation will come to an end and the truth will shine forth once again. When this takes place, those with the readiness to ponder and search will be equipped with a greater capacity for caution and awareness.

Regardless of how much truth there is to the claim that Muslims have departed from their noble Islamic way of life in recent years, it is my personal belief that the upcoming generation of Muslims possesses a deeper awareness of true Islam and a greater capacity for careful thought and observation than any other modern generation. Hence, it will not be long before we find that such awareness has been transformed into a positive, active movement which corrects distortions, straightens that which has grown crooked, and rebuilds the Islamic edifice from the bottom up.

In writing these studies, I have adopted a didactic method based on the induction of rules and principles rather than the abstract, analytical, literary approach, granting, of course, that each method offers its own advantages and benefits. The reason for this choice was that the didactic approach is more in keeping with the university-related audience to whom I am addressing this book. Moreover, it was the satisfaction expressed by my readers – despite their differing backgrounds and characteristics – which moved me to expand the book and to make it more detailed. However, I realize that I have not done the research justice or dealt with all the topics which need to be treated. The reasons for this are, firstly, my undoubted inadequacies, and secondly, the fact that I do not wish to write at such length on questions, rulings, and their various implications that the reader finds it difficult to read the book from beginning to end. For if the book became too lengthy, its value would be diminished, in my view, and it would become a reference work to be consulted on certain occasions rather than a work which is easily accessible to the ordinary reader.

There is, however, another group of people who have not taken kindly to what I have done. In fact, some of them have been so unsympathetic toward my work that their criticism seems to be motivated by hatred and resentment rather than by a spirit of impartial scientific inquiry. I would have liked for such critics to bring my attention to some error which I have committed in my research or some oversight of which I have been guilty in the explication of some ruling or argument. If they did so, I would be sincerely grateful to them. However, all I have encountered is the sort of fruitless faultfinding that arises from a desire to

inflict pain, vent one's anger, and register a victory for a particular group and its narrow-minded views.

For example, based on the guidance given by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the actions of his Companions, I present indisputable evidence for the legitimacy of seeking the aid of the Messenger of God (pbuh), both during his life on earth and after his death. I also note that the Prophet's (pbuh) life provides a clear basis for the legitimacy of rising out of respect for a person who is approaching. In discussing this point, I make mention of the relevant evidence and explain the statements made by scholars concerning the difference between rising to honor a person who has arrived in one's presence, and remaining standing even after such a person has been seated. I explain what the Sunnah has to say on this matter and conclude that such a gesture is legitimate if associated with the relevant conditions and restrictions as set forth in the sound Sunnah and in the principles governing etiquette.

I also maintain that the Prophet's life (pbuh) provides support for the legitimacy of performing a prayer which one has missed, whether it was missed intentionally or unintentionally; in discussing this question, I present the relevant evidence, then decide on the appropriate ruling in light thereof. If I had found that the available evidence supported the opposite ruling, I would have stated this, and I would have adopted the position which is consistent with the related evidence. However, under no circumstances can I disregard the clear meaning of the given rulings and the evidence which supports them simply in order to imitate a certain group of people who enjoy opposing the imams and the majority of Islamic scholars, then base a new school of thought on such opposition without hesitating to disparage or even curse them publicly. God forbid that impartial, scientific inquiry on our part should turn into a hardened, ego-driven bigotry!

I also would have wished that this group of people, who continue to take up people's energy and time with their opinions and independent judgments on marginal legal questions, had made an attempt to work on finding solutions to the grave, serious problems being faced by people today, problems the treatment of which requires the expenditure of tremendous energy and great effort if the Muslims are to be delivered from their woeful effects. However, amazingly enough, this group continues to disregard all the events with which our modern times are seething. Such groups hover around peoples' minds, as it were, awaiting the opportunity to do harm to religion and faith. In so doing, they seek to ensure that they go on sitting "high and dry" despite the storms they have stirred up over issues which people have been arguing about since time immemorial, and without anything to show for their disputes but more hatred in people's souls.

If this group of people were sincere in their desire to serve God, they could have simply embraced the view of which they are convinced, then left others to embrace whatever views they themselves find most compelling. They could have stopped trying to impose their authority on people by stirring up controversies and violence and disparaging others' ideas. The Muslims who came before us held firmly to those points about which there is complete certainty with regard to belief and practice, exerting concerted efforts to defend such beliefs and practices. However, if they went further to discuss matters related to independent interpretations based on individual opinion, they were not disturbed by disagreements which might arise among them in this regard. Hence, various schools of thought came into being, yet none of them felt compelled to browbeat others by imposing its own views on them.

If such people continue to comport themselves in this dictatorial manner, Islamic unity will die an early death, as it were, and the manifestations of power, civilization, and glory which our Islamic history once witnessed will be a thing of the past.

As readers explore such questions about which the aforementioned group has disputed, and about which I myself am in agreement with the majority of Muslims, I ask them simply to examine the related evidence and the extent of its soundness or strength. Then, after observing the manner in which my conclusions have been drawn, they are free to adopt whatever view is most cogent to them without allowing any sort of intellectual fanaticism to hold sway over their thinking.

The most serious danger lies not in two people disagreeing over a matter in which each one has been led to his or her respective view by convincing evidence; rather, the danger is that an opinion which one holds based on sound thinking may turn into a bigoted prejudice that takes hold of his soul. May God Almighty bring us to agreement on that which is true and guide us along the straight path, causing all of our actions to be performed for Him alone; indeed, He is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer.

Muhammad Sa'id Ibn Mulla Ramadan al-Buti

Damascus, 17 Jumadá al-ülá 1388 A.H., 10 April 1968

Section One
Preliminary Discussion

- **The Importance of the Prophetic Biography for an Understanding of Islam**
- **The Prophetic Biography: How Its Study Has Evolved and How It Needs to Be Understood**
- **The Secret Behind the Choice of the Arabian Peninsula as the Birthplace of Islam**
- **Muhammad (pbuh), Seal of the Prophets, and the Relationship Between His Message and Those of Previous Monotheistic Religions**
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The Importance of the Prophetic Biography
For an Understanding of Islam

The purpose for which we study the prophetic biography and its juristic implications is not merely to become acquainted with historical events or to narrate interesting or lovely stories. Hence, we must not look upon the study of this topic as a merely academic investigation as we would the study of the life of a caliph or some historical era.

Rather, the aim of such a study is to enable Muslims who have a merely cognitive understanding of the truth of Islam – that is, a mental grasp of its principles, rules and legislation - to gain an understanding of this truth in its entirety as embodied in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). In other words, the study of the prophetic biography is a practical task the goal of which is to embody the Islamic reality as a complete whole as seen in its exemplar, Muhammad (pbuh).

The various aspects of this goal may be summarized as follows:

1- To provide an understanding of the true character of the Apostle (pbuh) through his life and the circumstances in which he lived, thereby arriving at the certainty that Muhammad (pbuh) was not merely a genius whose intellect enabled him to gain a place of prominence among his people, but, first and foremost, a messenger who was granted success by God and upheld through divine inspiration.

2- To enable readers to discover that they have before them the exemplary model for how to comport themselves virtuously in all spheres of life. Such an exemplar can then be the basis for a kind of "constitution" to live by. No matter how far we may search for an ideal to follow in this or that area of life, we will find it nowhere as clearly or fully as we will in the life of the Messenger of God (pbuh). Consequently, God has made him (pbuh) a model for all of humanity: "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of God a good example" (Qur'an 33: 21).

3- To enable students of the biography of the Prophet (pbuh) to better understand the Qur'an and to gain a better sense of its spirit and its purposes, since many Qur'anic verses are only explained and clarified by the events of the Prophet's life and the attitudes which he took toward them.

4- To allow the Muslim to acquire a sound, accurate foundation in Islamic knowledge and culture, whether it be related to Islamic doctrine, regulations, or morals; after all, the Prophet's life is nothing other than an illuminated, concrete reflection of the entire corpus of Islam's principles and precepts.

5- To provide Muslim teachers and propagators of the Islamic faith with a living exemplar of the ideal educational methods. Muhammad (pbuh) was a discerning, virtuous instructor who spared no effort in the search for the most effective means of educating and nurturing others throughout the various phases of his mission.

An examination of the life of the Prophet (pbuh) is capable of achieving all of these purposes because it encompasses all aspects of human and social existence insofar as each of us is both an individual with his or her own independent existence, and an effective member of a society. His life (pbuh) offers us a striking illustration of a youth who is upright in all his conduct and trustworthy in his dealings both with his companions and his entire people. It also presents us with a superb example of a human being who summons others to the worship of God with wisdom and righteous counsel and who does his utmost to

deliver the message with which he has been entrusted; of a head of state who administers affairs with adroitness and paramount wisdom; of the ideal husband and father known and for the tenderness of his sentiments and his clear delineation of the rights and duties of husband, wife, and children; of the skilled military commander and the upright, yet worldly-wise politician; of the teacher who, with meticulous care and fairness, combines the fulfillment of his duty to worship and devote himself to his Lord, and good-humored, gentle companionship toward his family and Companions.

The study of the life of the Prophet (pbuh) serves to highlight all these human dimensions, embodied in the most sublime exemplar and the most consummate form.

The Prophetic Biography:
How its Study Has Evolved and
How it Needs to be Understood Today

The Prophetic Biography and History

The biography of Muhammad (pbuh) forms the central underpinning for the forward movement of the great history in which Muslims take pride, regardless of the language they speak or the region in which they live. It was with this biography as their point of departure that the Muslims recorded history, since the first events which were written down by Muslim writers were those which took place in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). This was then followed by the recording of the events which have occurred in succession until the present day.

Even the history of the pre-Islamic era, which stretches forth across the Arabian Peninsula beyond the wall of Islam, so to speak, came to be studied and written down by Arab Muslims and others based on the guidence of Islam, whose advent defined the meaning of pre-Islamic times and whose founder's unparalleled life became a paramount teacher of history.

Hence, the prophetic biography is the fulcrum around which the movement to record the history of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula revolved; in fact, it was the primary factor which influenced the course of events, first on the peninsula, and subsequently, in the rest of the Islamic world. With respect to the art of narrating historical events, the Arabs and Muslims came to possess an exacting, unparalleled scientific method of observing events and distinguishing sound, reliable accounts from unreliable ones. However, they would never have discovered this method or succeeded in implementing it in their historical writings had it not been for the prophetic biography, since it faced them with the religious duty to record it in a manner which would ensure that it was not tainted by error, confusion, or falsehood. After all, Muslims knew that the life story and Sunnah[1] of the Apostle of God (pbuh) were the primary keys to the understanding of the Qur'an, the book of Almighty God, and that these together – the prophetic biography and the Sunnah -- formed the most perfect model for the manner in which one ought to apply the Qur'anic teachings. Based on their firm conviction that God's messenger (pbuh) was indeed a prophet, that the Qur'an was truly God's word, that they had been charged with the responsibility to live in accordance therewith and that God would hold them strictly accountable for their obedience or disobedience in this matter, Muslims were moved to do their utmost to arrive at a scientific method which would preserve the sacred truths which go to make up the prophetic biography and Sunnah.

What I mean by "scientific method" here is the rules which govern the categorization of prophetic traditions -- that is, reports of particular actions and words of the Prophet (pbuh) -- based on the degree of soundness or weakness which characterizes each one, as well as the categorization of the narrators of such traditions based on their level of trustworthiness. This method came into existence initially in order to serve the sacred Sunnah, for which the prophetic biography must serve as the foundation. Following this, it became a method to be employed in the service of history in general, and a measure by which to distinguish historical facts from the fabrications which may come to be associated with them.

Based on the foregoing, one can see that the writing of the prophetic biography was the portal through which Muslims entered into the study and recording of history in general, and that the scientific rules

which they employed in order to systematize and regulate narratives and reports were the same rules which Muslim minds had once devised in response to the need to protect the initial sources and fountainheads of Islam from being tainted by spurious elements.

How the Writing of the Prophetic Biography Began and Evolved

The recording of the Sunnah was temporally prior to that of the prophetic biography, since the writing of the Sunnah commenced during the lifetime of the Messenger of God (pbuh), both with his permission and, indeed, at his behest. This occurred after the Prophet (pbuh) was assured that his Companions had become aware of the major difference between the miraculous style of the Qur'an and the merely eloquent style of the prophetic hadiths[2] lest they confuse the two.

As for a more general account of the life and military campaigns of God's Messenger (pbuh), this was recorded later than the Sunnah, even though the Companions had been concerned to transmit oral accounts of his life and military expeditions. The first individuals to take an interest in the prophetic biography were êUrwah Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 92 A.H.), Aban Ibn 'Uthman (d. 105 A.H.), Wahb Ibn Munabbih (d. 110 A.H.), Shurahbil Ibn Sa'd (d. 123 A.H.), and Ibn Shihab Al-Zuhri (d. 124 A.H.). These men formed the avant-garde of those who demonstrated concern for the writing of the prophetic biography, and their writings occupied a leading place in this great scientific task.

As we have indicated above, the writing of the prophetic biography may be viewed as the first step toward the writing of history in general. This is true despite the fact that many of the events which form part of the Prophet's biography are recorded in the Qur'an as well as in the books of the Sunnah, which concern themselves with the Prophet's words and actions, particularly those with relevance to Islamic legislation. However, everything which was written by these men was destroyed over time, and nothing but scattered remains of their writings have survived to the present day. Some of their contents are contained in the accounts of al-Tabari, and it is believed that part of what was written by Wahb Ibn Munabbih is still preserved in Hamburg, Germany.

Nevertheless, the generation which succeeded these writers included a number of individuals who seized upon everything they had written and preserved most of it in their own writings, the majority of which have reached us thanks to God's providence and grace. A leading figure in this generation was Muhammad Ibn Ishaq (d. 152 A.H.); researchers agree that what Ibn Ishaq wrote is the most reliable material on the prophetic biography from his era.[3] Ibn Ishaq's book, Al-Maghazi is no longer extant; however, Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik, better known as Ibn Hisham, preserved and transmitted Ibn Ishaq's book in a revised, more polished, form only fifty years after its original composition. According to Ibn Khallikan, "This Ibn Hisham is the one who compiled the biography of the Messenger of God (pbuh) from Ibn Ishaq's Al-Maghazi, then refined and condensed it. This work, known as Sirat Ibn Hisham, is the prophetic biography which is now available to us."[4]

The sources for the prophetic biography which are recognized by writers of all generations are limited to the following:

1- The Holy Qur'an which, despite its unique style, is itself the most reliable source for knowledge about the general features and phases of the Prophet's life.

2- The books containing the prophetic Sunnah, which were written by hadith scholars known for their veracity and trustworthiness. These include the six books,[5] Imam Malik's Muwatta', Imam Ahmad Ibn

Hanbal's Musnad, and others, although the primary concern of such writings was the Prophet's words and deeds insofar as they were a source of legislation rather than simply as history to be recorded. Consequently, the traditions in many of these books were arranged under juristic headings, while others were categorized according to the names of the Companions who transmitted them without any consideration for their temporal order.

3- The narrators who were interested in the biography of the Prophet (pbuh) and his life in general. Many of the Companions were interested in the Prophet's biography as well; in fact, virtually every one of the Companions who was with the Messenger of God (pbuh) in some life situation related it more than once to the other Companions and to those who succeeded them. However, none of them was concerned initially with the compilation and recording of this biography. In this connection, it bears noting the difference between what is referred to in general as "writing" and "recording", and what is referred to more specifically as "composition" or "compilation." As we have noted above, the former existed with regard to the prophetic Sunnah during the lifetime of the Messenger of God (pbuh); the latter, however, which refers to the gathering of written material in book form, commenced only later, when the need for such compilation arose.

The Scientific approach to the Narration of the Prophetic Biography

It is a generally recognized fact that the writing of the prophetic biography falls under the rubric of what is generally referred to as history, even though the prophetic biography, as we have explained, was in fact the point of departure for history, providing the needed motivation for the observation of events and developments which preceded the life of the Prophet (pbuh), as well as those which occurred later.

But, we might ask: What method was followed by the writers of the prophetic biography? Their approach was to adopt what is known as the objective method of writing history, in accordance with the scientific standards which we will have occasion to mention below. What this means is that the function of the writers and scholars of the prophetic biography was simply to record those events the reports of which had been shown to be accurate based on a scientific criterion. This criterion was based on the rules governing the science of the categorization of hadith, which have to do with both the sanad, or the chain of authorities on which the hadith is based, and the matn, or its actual text; it was based, in addition, on the rules for determining the trustworthiness of a given hadith narrator.

If these writers were led by such rules to the conclusion that a certain report or event was reliable, they would record it without interpolating their own conceptions, personal impressions, or environmental influences; in this manner, they avoided any sort of tampering or distortion. They believed that the historical event which comes to be known within the framework of such scientific, exacting criteria is a sacred reality which must be made manifest for all to see just as it is. Hence, they would have considered it an unforgivable betrayal to set up their own personal analyses and aspirations, which tend to be reflections of one's own environment or the fruits of narrow-mindedness, as a tyrannical ruler who precludes or twists whatever does not meet with his approval.

Given the protection provided by such scientific principles and this objective view of history, the biography of the Chosen One (pbuh) has reached us, beginning with his birth and origins and including his early childhood, the supernatural signs which accompanied the various phases of his childhood and youth, his call by God and the phenomenon of revelation which became manifest in his life, his uprightness and trustworthiness, the miracles which God worked through him, and the various phases of the mission in which he carried out his Lord's command: first pacifism, then defense, then an all-out jihad wherever his call to the worship of God met with any threat. In addition, the biography includes the decrees and legal principles which were revealed to the Messenger of God (pbuh), both in the form of the miraculous Qur'an to be recited, and the prophetic traditions which served to explain and clarify.

Hence, the historical task as it related to the prophetic biography consisted solely of transmitting it to us whole and complete. This, in turn, was made possible by the scientific, objective principles which served to protect the narratives from corruption or irregularity, whether with respect to their chains of transmission and the character of the men who passed them down, or the narratives' content and the events to which they referred.

As for the induction of precepts, principles and meanings from these reports, this is another scientific task which has nothing to do with history and which must not be confused with it. Such induction is a distinctive, independent scientific task which fulfills its role based on still another approach and other

rules. Such rules serve to regulate the process of inducing principles and drawing conclusions from the events of history within an objective framework which removes it from the power of illusion and that craving of the individual will which William James referred to as "the will of belief."

Such rules include those of inductive analogy, the law of commitment, and dalalah, or the induction of general principles based on the use of a particular word in a hadith, Qur'anic verse, etc. Based on rules such as these, numerous precepts have been induced from the events recorded in the prophetic biography, some of them having to do with belief and certainty, and others related to legislation and conduct. The important thing to note in this connection is that the induction of such rulings took place separately from the recording, content, or meaning of history; rather, this process was an independent, painstaking scientific effort based on the historical record which rested, in turn, on the scientific regulations which we have mentioned.

The Prophetic Biography in Light of the Modern Methods of Writing History

In the 19th Century there appeared a variety of new methods of writing and recording history alongside the objective method, or what has been termed "the scientific method." Most of these approaches can be grouped together under the heading, "the subjective method," of which Freud was one of the most zealous proponents. The leading figures associated with this method saw no harm in the historian's interpolating his own subjective preferences or intellectual, religious, or political inclinations into the explanation and analysis of events or pronouncing judgments on their protagonists. In fact, they believed it to be the historian's duty to do just this, not merely to describe events and compile the naked facts, as it were.

This approach makes the recording of history into an artistic endeavor rather than an exact, scientific task. As for us, we are not concerned here with a discussion and criticism of the various historical schools of thought. However, we cannot help but express our regret over the fact that this approach – in this age which takes such pride in science and its methodology – should find those willing to believe in it and even serve as its advocates. Such an approach, by virtue of certain persons' flights of sanguine imagination, selfish ambition, and bigoted caprice, has the potential of rending asunder all the facts and events which have been embraced by Time's ancient, sacred tabernacle. Untold facts have been falsified, events turned on their heads, glories annihilated, and innocents harmed under the tyranny of this biased, mock tribunal!

Hence, one may ask whether this new approach has exercised any influence over the writing and analysis of the prophetic biography. The fact is that this new approach to the writing of history became the foundation for a new school in the study and understanding of the prophetic biography as well. How did this school come into being, what were the factors which led to its inception, and what has become of it today?

The genesis of this school dates back to the days of the British occupation of Egypt, which at that time was the platform from which the Islamic world voiced its views. Egypt was likewise the source of intellectual authority to which Muslims yielded whenever they sought greater knowledge of Islam, just as they face Mecca whenever they wish to pray or make the pilgrimage. The persistence of this great voice, as well as the reverent attention which it continued to receive from the Muslim community, robbed the British occupation of the opportunity to achieve tranquillity or stability. However much Britain subjected the Nile Valley to itself by the force of iron and fire, as it were, it was, at best, a temporary subjection, one which threatened to erupt into rebellion so long as Al-Azhar University maintained its vibrant leadership.

Given this situation, the British occupiers had no choice but to take one of two steps: (1) bring about a rift between Al-Azhar and the Muslim people such that it ceased to enjoy authority among them, or (2) make its way by stealth into the center of Al-Azhar's command operations, whence it could steer the leadership in a direction which would serve the interests of the occupation and enable it to achieve the peace of mind and stability which it had lacked heretofore. In view of the fact that the second plan was more workable and less likely to be detected, Britain adopted it without hesitation.[6]

The only way to achieve the planned infiltration into the ranks of Al-Azhar's intellectual leadership was to rely upon a painful weak point which plagued Muslims in general, and Egypt in particular, namely, Muslims' sense of lostness, backwardness, and disunity. This sense was accompanied by their awareness of

the remarkable reawakening which had been witnessed by the West in the various intellectual, scientific, and cultural arenas. They undoubtedly longed for the day when they would be liberated from the burdens which had set them back for so long, and they could take part with others in the journey of civilization, culture, and modern science.

In accordance with the aforementioned scheme, the whispers borne aloft by Britain's imperialistic ruse began to reach the ears and hearts of some of Egypt's intellectual leaders. As for the content of such murmurs, it was the suggestion that the West had not been freed of its own shackles until it subjected religion to the criteria of "science". After all – said they -- religion is one thing, and science is another, and the two can only be reconciled by subjecting the former to the latter. Hence, if the Islamic world was truly concerned to achieve such liberation, then it would have no choice but to tread the same path. In other words, it would have to understand Islam in the East in the way in which Christianity had come to be understood in the West; moreover, this could only be achieved by purging Islamic thought of anything having to do with the unseen or miraculous, that is, anything which could not be understood based on the standards of modern science.

It was not long before those whose eyes had been dazzled by the displays of the modern European renaissance were taken in by such suggestions. Such people, for whom the realities of faith in God had not taken firm hold in their hearts and whose minds had not gained a firm grasp of the realities of modern science, began calling for liberation from any doctrine which could not be verified by the discoveries of modern science, or which could not be subjected to the authority of direct human experience. Based on this new direction in their thought, such leaders undertook what later came to be referred to as "religious reform." Such reform required that they engage in numerous enterprises, including the development of the writing and understanding of the prophetic biography and the adoption of a new approach to its analysis which would be in keeping with their intention of ruling out anything which fell within the realm of the unseen or miraculous and which, therefore, was unacceptable and incomprehensible to modern science.

In pursuance of these aims, the proponents of such enterprises had no better resource at their disposal than the subjective method of writing history. Books and other writings on the prophetic biography began to appear, replacing the standards used previously for evaluating narratives and their chains of transmission with the method of personal induction based on subjective criteria devoid of any controls but personal inclinations and beliefs and ulterior motives. In reliance upon this method, such writers began setting aside everything in the biography of the Prophet (pbuh) that might conflict with the known and familiar by belonging to the realm of the miraculous and supernatural. At the same time, they began promoting the image of the Prophet (pbuh) as a man possessed of the qualities of genius, greatness, heroism, and the like, thereby distracting their readers from reflection on those qualities which might open them to the unfamiliar, including the prophecy, revelation, and mission which made up the primary components of his persona.

Husayn Haykal's book, Hayat Muhammad is viewed as the most salient example of this trend in the writing of the prophetic biography. Its author gives voice to this persuasion in a frank, self-satisfied manner when he states, "I have not relied upon what is recorded in the books on the prophetic biography and traditions, preferring rather to proceed in this study on the basis of the scientific method"!

Another example of the writings which grew out of this modern approach to the prophetic biography is the series of articles which was published by the late Muhhammad Farid Wajdi in the magazine, Nur al-Islam under the title, "The Muhammadan Biography in the Light of Science and Philosophy." The author states, "Our readers will have noted that in what we write concerning this biography, we are taking great care not to go to excess in interpreting events as being miraculous so long as it is possible to explain them based on ordinary causes, even if such an explanation involves some degree of awkwardness."

Still other examples of this approach may be found in the numerous works on the life of Muhammad (pbuh) which were published by a certain group of Orientalists whose historical writings are based on the subjective method to which we have referred above. One finds them glorifying the person of Muhammad (pbuh) and extolling his greatness and praiseworthy qualities, yet in a manner which remains far removed from everything which might alert the reader to the meaning of prophethood or divine revelation in his life. No attention whatsoever is given to the chains of transmission and the narratives which, if taken seriously, would lead them inevitably to certainty concerning facts and events which it is not in their interest to acknowledge.

Thus it is that by following the subjective approach to the writing of history, the champions of this new school were given free rein to repudiate any fact or event in the prophetic biography which was not to their liking, regardless of how much support it enjoyed in the way of scientific, indisputable evidence. They set up their own inclinations, desires, and long-term goals as ruler over the realities of history and the analysis of its causes, and as the sole judge of what ought to be accepted or rejected.

We have seen, for example, that every supernatural event mentioned in the most well established reports in the prophetic Sunnah, as well as those mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, are interpreted in such a way that they remain within the realm of the ordinary and in harmony with their particular aims. Moreover, such interpretations are maintained even when they are awkward and utterly deceptive. Thus, for example, the "birds in flocks" (tayr al-ababil) (referred to in Surat al-Fil ("The Elephant")) are interpreted as referring to smallpox, even though this interpretation is in conflict with what is clearly stated in the text, while the Prophet's (pbuh) midnight journey to the seven heavens (al-Isra'), referred to explicitly in the Qur'an, is taken to refer to nothing but a journey of the spirit through the world of visions. As for the angels who were provided by God to the Muslims during the Battle of Badr, they are said to be nothing more than the moral support which God gave them!

The last of these laughable interpretations is the claim that prophecy in the life of the Messenger of God (pbuh), the faith which his Companions placed in him, and the Islamic conquest overall, were nothing but a leftist revolution by the poor against the rich and the feudal lords in response to economic contingencies, and that it was carried out in pursuit of a more assured livelihood and expanded power.

This method of studying the prophetic biography in particular, and Islamic history in general, is nothing but a dangerous stratagem which less sophisticated Muslims have been incapable of recognizing, and which has met with ready acceptance and enthusiasm on the part of the hypocritical and the capricious. What such simple-minded individuals have failed to realize is that this imperialistic suggestion which calls upon the Muslims to engage in what has been termed "revolutionary reform" with respect to Islamic doctrine aims, in fact, to blast this doctrine to its very foundations. They have failed to realize that emptying Islam of its supernatural elements will only serve to fill it with merely human achievements, which in turn will render it nothing but a mere remnant of what it once was. After all, divine revelation – being the mainspring and source of Islam – is the epitome of all supernatural, miraculous phenomena. Yet those who are quick to reject those elements of the prophetic biography which belong to the miraculous on the pretext that they are inconsistent with the laws of nature and modern scientific knowledge will, based on this self-same pretext, be no less quick to reject divine revelation in its entirety, including all that it tells us about Resurrection, Judgment Day, Paradise, and Perdition.

Such persons failed to perceive that religion which is sound in itself has never stood in need of a reformer to set it aright or to change its heart and substance. They failed to understand this reality despite the fact that science itself – had they grasped its truth and logic - would have required that they understand it. So dazzled were they with the modern European renaissance, together with all the slogans and terminology of modern science, that their eyes were blinded. Despite their need for a comprehensive, accurate understanding of the realities behind such slogans, their thinking was dominated by the mirage of a

"reformist" reawakening which would develop Islamic doctrine in the East as Christian doctrine had been developed in the West.

Hence, the modern school to which we have alluded here arose more out of psychological turmoil than it did a studied, scientific fact which had taken hold of the mind.

What Has Become of This School Today

The fact is that the enthusiasm and interest once shown in this school's approach to writing and understanding the prophetic biography represented a historical watershed. As for those who were destined to pass through this experience, they have an excuse in the fact that, as we have mentioned, they were opening their eyes at the time to the scientific renaissance in Europe after a long period of heedlessness and inattention. It is only natural for one's eyes to be dazzled when they first encounter the light. When this takes place, the likenesses of things are not easily distinguished from one another until, after some time has passed and the eye has adapted to the light, things begin to take on their distinctive shapes and the facts become clear and unambiguous.

And this, in fact, is what has occurred. The veil has been lifted from people's eyes and, unlike those who were once taken in by science's slogans and jargon, those of today's keen, sophisticated generation have begun dealing with science based on its true substance. Equipped with the insight of the knowledgeable researcher and the free thinker, they have reached the certainty that what is referred to as the supernatural and the miraculous cannot conflict, in essence, with the facts and criteria of science. This is because those phenomena which were once labeled "supernatural" were referred to as such because they violated that which was familiar to people. However, familiarity or habit cannot be treated as a scientific measure of what is or is not possible. Science would never declare that only those events which can be observed with the human eye can actually occur, or that anything which is unknown or unfamiliar to human experience is, therefore, impossible.

It is now recognized by virtually all researchers and educated individuals that, according to the most recent developments in scientific knowledge, the link which we observe between causes and effects is merely one of regular association which has been analyzed and explained, and that following such analysis and explanation, laws have been induced from such links. However, these laws are subject to the appearance of such links, rather than the reverse.

If you were to ask a law of science what it thought of a certain divine miracle, it would tell you: Miraculous events are not within my field of specialization; it is not for me to pass judgment on them. However, if some "supernatural" event occurred before me, then it would become a subject for investigation, analysis, and explanation, after which it would be covered by its own special law.[7] In so replying, it would be voicing what has come to be comprehended by every scientist, and by anyone with insightful understanding of modern civilization.

Gone is the time when some scientists believed that the influence of natural causes on their effects was something inevitable and unalterable. Rather, we have witnessed a victory for the truth which was pointed out and defended for so long by Muslim scientists in general and, in particular, by Imam Ghazali, namely, that the connections between causes and effects are nothing more than abstract, correlative links, and that science with all of its judgments and laws is really nothing but a wall which has been raised atop the foundation of such correlations. As for the secret behind these correlations, it is known only to the majestic God who has created and guided all things. Even the empirical scientist David Hume stated this fact in the most unambiguous, adamant terms.

Indeed, before accepting any report, be it related to an ordinary matter or some supernatural event, every reasonable human being who respects the mind and the truth has no choice but to stipulate one condition, namely, that this report be one which has reached him by sound, scientific means based on the rules of narration, chains of transmission, and the requirements for determining a narrator's degree of trustworthiness such that the report can be accepted with full confidence. As for a detailing of such scientific standards, this requires an exhaustive discussion which is not of direct concern to us here.

A scientist of today would be utterly taken aback by a statement such as that made by Husayn Haykal in the introduction to his book, The Life of Muhammad, "I have not relied upon what is recorded in the books on the prophetic biography and traditions, preferring rather to proceed in this study on the basis of the scientific method"!! He is reassuring us that he has not made use even of the most well attested reports recorded in the books of al-Bukhari and Muslim, and that in so abstaining, he is preserving the dignity of science! What he is implying here is that what was passed on by Imam al-Bukhari within the most impressive, extraordinary constraints reflective of the rarest scientific vigilance as it pertained to the narration of the prophetic words and deeds is a deviation from the path of science, whereas the method of inference, intuition, and guesswork serves to preserve the dignity and high standards of science! Is this not, on the contrary, one of the most grievous catastrophes that science could have suffered?

How We Ought to Study the Prophetic Biography in Light of the Foregoing

It is a known fact that when Muhammad (pbuh) appeared on the Arabian Peninsula, he presented himself to the world as a prophet sent by God Almighty to all people, to affirm to them the truth which had been brought by the prophets who had come before him, and to lay upon them the same responsibilities with which former prophets had charged their own peoples. He made it clear that he was the final prophet to be sent in the chain of messengers who had preceded him, and that he was merely a human being with all the qualities to be found in other members of the human race. However, God had entrusted him, through divine revelation, with the task of communicating a message that would acquaint people with their true identities and grant them awareness of where this earthly life fits, geographically and temporally, into the wider scheme of the divine realm. This message which he brought would make people aware of their inevitable fate after death, and draw their attention to the necessity of bringing their freely chosen conduct into conformity with their inescapable identities as servants of God. He (pbuh) took every opportunity to remind his listeners that he had no authority to add to, remove from, or otherwise alter the content of this message which God had assigned him to deliver to all people. The divine revelation itself affirms this same fact: "Now if he (whom We have entrusted with the message) had dared to attribute some (of his own) sayings to Us, We would indeed have seized him by his right hand, and would indeed have cut his life-vein, and none of you could have saved him!" (Qur'an 69: 44).

Muhammad (pbuh) did not present himself to the world as a political or nationalist leader, the founder of a school of thought or philosophy, or a social reformer. Never in his entire life did he engage in any behavior which would suggest that he sought to be known in any of these ways. Hence, if we wish to study the life of such a man, logic requires that we study his life in light of the identity on the basis of which he presented himself to the world, our aim being to discover whatever evidence this offers of his truthfulness or lack thereof. This, in turn, requires that we study all aspects of his life, allowing our findings to serve as a guiding light which can reveal to us, through scientific, objective evidence, the genuineness of the identity which he claimed for himself.

Of course, it might be reasonable for us to claim that we are under no obligation to occupy our minds with the meaning of prophethood and the message which Muhammad (pbuh) embodied in himself; however, these matters have a direct bearing upon our freedom, our conduct, and our very destinies, revealing duties with respect to both knowledge and behavior which, if we fail to fulfill them, may cause us tremendous misery and even lead us to perdition. Consequently, it is too serious for us to imagine that they do not concern us, or for us to carelessly neglect them!

It would be patent foolishness for us to shun the study of this identity by which Muhammad (pbuh) introduced himself to the world, then distract ourselves with the contemplation of other facets of his person which have nothing to do with this. Indeed, what foolishness could be greater than for us to allow this man, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah (pbuh), to reveal himself to us, then warn us with complete, heartfelt conviction, "So help me, God, you shall die just as you sleep, you shall be raised as easily as you awaken, after which you will either enjoy unending Paradise, or unending torment" – only to demonstrate that all that concerns us is to meditate on his genius, eloquence, and wisdom?! Suppose that, as you were standing at a crossroads, someone approached you and began showing you the way leading to where you wished to

go and warning you of the trackless, desolate regions in which you would be certain to perish. Then, however, rather than hearkening to what he had to say, you delved into a study and analysis of his appearance, the color of his clothes, and his manner of speech!

Sound reason requires that we study the life of our master Muhammad (pbuh) from all angles: his upbringing and morals, his personal life and his environment, his patient endurance and his struggles, his conduct both in peacetime and war, his manner of dealing with his friends and his enemies, and his attitude toward the world with its passions and vanities. Such an investigation must be an objective undertaking devoid of caprice or prejudice, which strives for veracity and accuracy based on the scientific method involving adherence to the rules governing narratives, chains of transmission, and the conditions on the basis of which these may be judged to be trustworthy. Moreover, in undertaking this study, we must allow it to be a ladder by which we reach a place where we can verify his prophethood and the reality of divine revelation in his life. Then, if it becomes clear to us that he was, in fact, a prophet who was granted divine revelation, we will realize that he did not merely invent his own laws and decrees but that he was, rather, faithful in delivering them to us as firmly established, irrevocable decrees from the Sustainer of all the Worlds. When this occurs, we will become aware of the weightiness of our responsibility both to preserve these laws and rulings and to carry them out.

If someone commits himself to study nothing of the prophetic biography but its merely humanistic aspects, then analyzes them in isolation from the identity which the Prophet (pbuh) claimed for himself, he is bound to lock himself into a maze of insoluble riddles. Such a person will stand bewildered before the mystery of the Islamic conquest, which made it possible for a ragtag band of aged sword-bearers who for years had been fighting amongst themselves to gain the seemingly magical power to destroy the fortress of Persian civilization and Byzantium's might and power. A researcher of this ilk will be at a loss to explain the mystery of a law that was formulated on the Arabian Peninsula before even the most rudimentary civilization had germinated there. What we have here, in fact, is an integrated set of laws with which the Arabian Peninsula was crowned when it was still in the infancy phase of its quest for knowledge, culture, and sophisticated social life. So, how does one reconcile this fact with the axiomatic premise of social scientists that the rise of integrated legislation in the life of a nation is a fruit of its cultural and civilizational maturity, the outcome of its advanced social structure?

All of these are riddles to which those who fail to take the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) into full account will find no solutions within the realm of ordinary material causes and explanations. How many researchers of this sort have racked their brains to no avail in search of a way out of their perplexity!

Nevertheless, the way out of such a quandary is quite clear. The way, as we have already stated, is for us to be logical and objective in the study of the prophetic biography, allowing the identity on the basis of which Muhammad (pbuh) presented himself to the world to be the focal point for the study of his life overall. If such a study leads us to conclude that he was a prophet sent by Almighty God, his prophethood will lead us, in turn, to the way out of our bewilderment and to the secret which lies behind the aforementioned riddles. Any true prophet must, of necessity, be supported by the God who sent him; in the case of Muhammad (pbuh), his prophethood necessitates that the Qur'an be God's revelation to him. This being the case, then the integrated legislation which he brought must be, not the invention of an unlettered nation such that it would be a cause for astonishment, but a revelation sent down by the Divine.

Thus God says to believers in his masterful self-revelation, "Be not, then, faint of heart, and grieve not: for you are bound to rise high if you are (truly) believers" (Qur'an 3: 139). He also states, "And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors" (Qur'an 28: 5); "(Remember) when you asked help of your Lord, and He answered you (saying), 'Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand from the angels, following one another. And God

made it not but good tidings and so that your hearts would be assured thereby. And victory is not but from God. Indeed, God is Exalted in Might" (Qur'an 8: 9-10).

That which was obscure will be clarified, the solution will appear, the veil will be removed, and things will return to normal, as it were, since the Creator of all powers and potentialities grants victory as He wills to those servants of His who place their faith in Him and who commit themselves to the path He has set forth. Indeed, the most utter confusion would have been our lot if God had pledged Himself to grant victory to his Messenger and support to his believing servants, after which the miracle of this victory and support had not occurred.

Why the Arabian Peninsula was Chosen As the Birthplace of Islam

Before we enter into a discussion of the Prophet's biography and of the Arabian Peninsula, where he was brought up and out of which God chose him, it behooves us to explore the divine wisdom which required that the Prophet's mission be carried out in this particular spot on the globe, and that the call to Islam commence at the hands of the Arabs rather than some other group of people. In order to clarify these points, we must first examine the Arabs' distinguishing characteristics prior to Islam; we must also develop a conception of the geographical location in which they lived and the place which it occupied vis-a-vis the surrounding regions, as well as the customs, dispositions, and cultures which prevailed in neighboring nations, such as Persia, Byzantium, Greece, and India.

Let us begin with a brief survey of the situation which prevailed immediately prior to the rise of Islam in those nations which surrounded the Arabian Peninsula. During the period under discussion, two states shared dominion over the civilized world, namely, Persia and Byzantium, followed by Greece and India. As for Persia, it was the arena of various conflicting religious and philosophical persuasions. The ruling class had embraced Zoroastrianism, whose philosophy included a preference for a man marrying his mother, daughter, or sister; Yazdajird II, who ruled in the mid-5th Century A.D., is reported to have married his daughter. This way of life also included other shameless moral perversions which space does not permit us to enumerate here.

In addition, there was Mazdaism which, according to Imam al-Shahristani, approved the practice of making both women and money into the common property of a group of men, who would share them in common just as they would water, fire, and pastureland. This religious persuasion enjoyed great popularity among the hedonistic and frivolous.[8]

Byzantium, which was dominated by the colonialist spirit, was embroiled in a religious dispute with the Christians of Syria and Egypt, and relied on its military power and imperialistic designs in a remarkable adventure whose aim was to develop and manipulate Christianity in ways which promised to satisfy its deep-seated aspirations and longings. However, Byzantium was no less decadent than the state of Persia, in which the manner of life which prevailed was one of immorality, degradation and economic injustice due to the excessive imposition of tributes and taxes.

As for Greece, it was steeped in obsessions based on its theological superstitions and myths, which caused it suffering without bearing any evident useful results. With respect to India, Dr. Abu al-¼asan al-Nadwi states, "Writers on the history of India agree that its most decadent period religiously, morally, and socially was that which commenced at the beginning of the 6th Century A.D., during which India, together with neighboring states, contributed to both moral and social deterioration."[9]

The common denominator which caused these various nations to fall into such disintegration, turmoil, and misery was a civilization and culture founded upon material values alone, devoid of an ideal to guide it along a straight, sound path. After all, civilization with all its varied components and expressions is nothing more than a means and a cause. Hence, if its people lack sound thinking and correct ideals, their civilization will be transformed at their hands into an instrument of decline which brings them down to the depths of misery and turmoil. If, on the other hand, they are given a standard based on well-guided reason

– something which rarely comes without religion and divine revelation – then all of their civilizational and cultural values will become a beautiful, easy path to complete happiness in its various forms and expressions.

As for the Arabian Peninsula, it was calm and far removed from all such upheavals. Its inhabitants did not enjoy the luxuries of Persia which would have enabled them to master the art of devising means of degradation, nor the philosophy of hedonism and licentiousness which they could cast in the mold of religion. They possessed neither Byzantium's military might wherewith to impose their will by force on any location in their vicinity, nor the luxury of delving into Greek philosophy and disputation, thereby to fall prey to myths and superstitions.

Rather, their dispositions were more like "raw" material which had not yet been smelted in any sort of transforming crucible and which, as a consequence, still reflected pristine human nature with its powerful bent toward noble human qualities such as loyalty, courage, generosity, pride, and chastity. However, they lacked the knowledge which would have shown the way to achieve such virtues. Living in the darkness of a simple, untarnished ignorance, they were prone to going astray from such human values; hence, one would find them killing their children in pursuit of honor and chastity, squandering needed wealth in pursuit of generosity, and stirring up armed conflicts amongst themselves in a demonstration of pride and courage.

This condition is referred to by God Almighty as being "astray" when He addresses these people, saying, "... remember God at the Sacred Monument. And remember Him as he has guided you, for indeed, you were before that among those astray" (Qur'an 2: 198). This quality of lostness, as it were, when compared to the condition of surrounding nations at that time, is more of an apology on their behalf than it is a rebuke. This is because these other nations, in the midst of their countless perversions, sought guiding light from the torches of civilization and refined culture and, as a consequence, were wallowing in the mire of their corruption with full understanding, awareness and acquiescence.

With respect to its geographical location, the Arabian Peninsula lay surrounded by a number of other nations. As Professor Muhammad al-Mubarak notes, it stood exactly midway between two corrupt civilizations: the materialistic civilization of the West, which presented an image of human beings so truncated, it hardly gives even a partial representation of reality, and the utopian spiritual civilizations of the Far East, such as those of India, China, and surrounding regions.[10]

If, then, we envision the condition in which the Arabs were living prior to Islam and that of the various surrounding nations, we can easily discern the divine wisdom in the Arabian Peninsula's having received the honor of being the place where he (pbuh) was born and carried out his mission, and in the Arabs' having been the first to carry the torch of the Islamic message in whose light human beings have devoted themselves to the service of God all over the globe.

Contrary to what some might suppose, the divine wisdom of which we speak lies not in the fact that people with false piety and sham civilizations are difficult to direct onto the right path due to their pride in what they are, seeing their corruption as something to be desired, whereas those who are still living through a period of searching and exploration are more willing to receive help and guidance since they do not deny their ignorance or make unfounded claims concerning their level of culture, knowledge, or civilization. Here, we say, is not where such wisdom lies. This analysis would apply, of course, to one whose capacities were limited and creaturely, and who would, as a consequence, distinguish between what is easy and difficult, preferring the former and avoiding the latter. In the case of God Almighty, however, had it been the divine will to send the Islamic message forth from some part of Persia, Byzantium, or India, He could have prepared the way for the success of this message there just as He did in the Arabian Peninsula. After all, how could such a thing be difficult for the Creator of all, the Origin of every means and cause?

Rather, the wisdom which lay in this choice required that the Messenger (pbuh) be unlettered, someone

who had never known what it was to recite from a book or to take up a pen and write, lest people doubt his prophethood, and lest they have reason to suspect the truthfulness of his message. In addition, this wisdom required that the environment into which he (pbuh) was sent likewise be unlettered by comparison with the other, surrounding nations; in other words, that it be an environment which had not been affected by the neighboring civilizations, and whose ways of thinking had not been complicated by their wayward philosophies.

For just as people might be afflicted with doubt if they saw that the Prophet was educated and well-versed in the ancient books, the history of bygone peoples, and the civilizations of neighboring nations, so also might they be suspicious if the Islamic call had arisen in a cultured, highly civilized nation steeped in philosophy and history, such as Persia, Greece, or Byzantium. After all, many a skeptic and many a nay-sayer might claim that it had been the long chain of cultural experiences and the development of philosophical thought which had given rise at last to this unique civilization and this consummate body of legislation.

The Holy Qur'an makes this wisdom quite clear when it says, "It is He Who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His Verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book (i.e. The Qur'an) and wisdom (i.e. the Sunnah), although they were before in clear error" (Qur'an 62: 2). The will of God Almighty required that his messenger be unlettered, and that the vast majority of the people among whom he appeared be likewise unlettered in order that the miracle of prophecy and of the Islamic law be patently clear to all, and lest there be confusion between this and the various, merely human, calls and messages. As one can plainly discern, this manifests a great mercy to God's servants.

There are, in addition, other facts which point to the providential wisdom in this choice, which may be summarized as follows:

As is known, God has made the Ka'bah a meeting place and a refuge for people. Moreover, it was ordained to be the first house devoted to worship and the performance of religious rites. In this manner, He fulfilled the mission of Abraham, the forefather of the prophets, may peace be upon him. Part of this fulfillment, however, required that this same blessed spot be the birthplace of the Islamic message, which is itself the religion of Abraham, and that it be here that the Seal of the Prophets (pbuh) was born and received his calling. This was only fitting, given that he was a descendent of Abraham, peace be upon him.

The geographical location of the Arabian Peninsula suited it for the function of bearing such a message, since it lies, as we have noted, at the center point amidst a number of other nations. It was this which made it possible for the message of Islam to radiate outward among all of the surrounding peoples and states with facility and ease. Clear evidence for this may be seen in the course taken by the Islamic message during the early days of Islam and during the era of the Orthodox Caliphs.

The wisdom of God required that the Arabic language be the medium through which the Islamic message was communicated, and that it be the primary, most direct instrument by means of which God Almighty's words were translated and delivered to us. If we were to do a thorough, comparative study of the special features of the various languages of the world, we would discover that the Arabic language is distinguished by a number of unique characteristics which it would be difficult to find in other languages, in consequence of which it is fitting that Arabic should have become the primary language of Muslims in their respective regions and countries.

Muhammad (pbuh), Seal of the Prophets, And the Relationship Between His Message And Those of the Previous Monotheistic Religions

Muhammad (pbuh) is the seal of the prophets; hence, no other prophet will succeed him. This is unanimously agreed upon by Muslims, and a necessary outcome of their religion. He (pbuh) said,

The relationship between me and the prophets who came before me may be likened to a man who constructed a building which, despite its soundness and beauty, lacked a brick in one of its corners. People then began walking round it, wondering at it and saying, "Why was this brick not put in place?" I am that brick, and I am the seal of the prophets.[11]

As for his message and the relation which it bears to the messages of previous prophets, it is based on a foundation of confirmation and completion, as the aforementioned hadith indicates. In fact, the message of every prophet rests on two foundations: (1) doctrine and (2) legislation and morals. As for doctrine, its contents remained unaltered from the time of Adam, may peace be upon him, to the time of the Seal of the Prophets (pbuh). This doctrine is, in short, faith in God's oneness, refusal to attribute to God any qualities which would be unworthy of the Divine, as well as faith in the Last Day, Judgment, Paradise, and Hell. Every one of the prophets has called his people to faith in these tenets, just as each of them came to confirm the message of those who preceded him and to announce the coming of those who would succeed him. Thus have the missions of the various prophets, sent though they were to a variety of peoples and nations, followed one another in succession. In so doing, they have confirmed a single reality, namely, that judgment belongs to God alone. It is this truth which the prophets have been commanded to communicate to people and to call upon them to obey. This is set forth clearly in God's holy book, where He states, "He (God) has ordained for you the same religion which He ordained for Noah, and that which we have revealed to you (O Muhammad), and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, to establish the religion and not be divided therein" (Qur'an 42: 13).

In fact, it is inconceivable that the messages of the true prophets would be in disagreement, since matters pertaining to them belong to the category of reports. Reports are something which cannot possibly differ from one reporter to the next if we assume that each of the reports is true. Hence, if we assume that there are two, equally true prophets, then it would be absurd for one of these prophets to be sent to declare to people that God is One of Three – exalted is He over what people ascribe to Him! --- only to have the other prophet, also sent by God, declare that God is One, without partners.

As for legislation, namely, the issuance of decrees whose purpose is to order the life of society and its individual members, it differs in terms of both quality and quantity, as it were, from one prophet to the next, may God's blessings and peace be upon them all. The reason for this is that legislation belongs not to the category of reports, but to that of institutions. Since the concept of legislation is based on what is required by the interests of humanity both in this world and the next, then it must reflect and be influenced by the passage of time and the changes undergone by nations and peoples. Add to this the fact that the messages and missions of the prophets who preceded Muhammad (pbuh) were addressed to particular nations rather than to all people, with the result that the legislative precepts related to these messages were restricted to particular contexts defined by the requirements of the specific groups of

people concerned.

Moses, for example, peace be upon him, was sent to the people of Israel, whose situation required that the law given them be a severe one based for the most part on divinely imposed duties rather than concessions. When time passed and the Prophet Jesus, may peace be upon him, was sent among them, he came bearing an easier, more lenient law than that which Moses had brought. Note, in this regard, what God Almighty says through Jesus, peace be upon him, as he addresses the people of Israel, "And I (have come) confirming what was before me of the Torah and to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you" (Qur'an 3: 50). In so saying, he made clear to them that with respect to matters of doctrine, he had come to confirm what is contained in the Torah and to renew the call to follow it. However, with respect to legislation and the rulings relating to what is forbidden and allowed, he had been commissioned to bring about some changes, to introduce concessions, and to abrogate certain statutes whose rigor had been oppressive to them.

Hence, every prophet's message contains both doctrine and legislation. His function with respect to doctrine is simply to confirm the same teaching with which former messengers were sent without introducing any change or alteration. With respect to legislation, by contrast, the law brought by each prophet rescinds everything in the one which preceded it except for those elements which the new legislation either explicitly upholds or approves through silence. In other words, the principle here is that the law of those who preceded us applies to us so long as it is not in conflict with the law we have received.

What becomes apparent on this basis is that there are not several different divinely revealed (or "heavenly") religions; rather, there are several different divinely revealed laws, each of which abrogated what preceded it until the crystallization of the last of these laws which, in accordance with God's wisdom, was delivered by the seal of all prophets and messengers. Hence, true religion is one. All of the prophets from Adam to Muhammad (pbuh) were sent to call people to surrender themselves to this religion, namely, Islam.[12]

It was with this religion that Abraham, Ishmael, and Jacob were sent. As God Almighty says, "And who would turn away from the religion of Abraham except him who befools himself? Truly, We chose him in this world and verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit (i.e. be a Muslim)!' He said, 'I have submitted myself to the Lord of the worlds.' And this (submission to God) was enjoined by Abraham upon his sons and by Jacob, (saying), 'O my sons! God has chosen for you the true religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims'" (Qur'an 2: 130-132).

It was likewise with this religion that Moses was sent to the people of Israel. Speaking of Pharaoh's sorcerers, God Almighty reports to us, "They said, 'Indeed, to our Lord we will return. And you do not resent us except because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. Our Lord, pour upon us patience and let us die as Muslims (in submission to You)'" (Qur'an 7: 125-126).

It was with this religion that Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon him, was sent as well. God Almighty says, "But when Jesus felt (persistence in) disbelief from them, he said, 'Who are my supporters for (the cause of) God?' The disciples said, 'We are supporters for God. We have believed in God and testify that we are Muslims (submitting to him)'" (Qur'an 3: 52).

One might ask: Then why do those who associate themselves with Moses, may blessings and peace be upon him, cling to a doctrine which differs from the message of monotheism with which all the prophets were sent? And why do those who associate themselves with Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon him, believe in still another doctrine? The answer to such questions may be found in what God Almighty says in His sacred book, "Indeed, the (true) religion in the sight of God is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out of jealous animosity between themselves" (Qur'an 3: 19). Also relevant here are the words of God Almighty referred to earlier: "He

(God) has ordained for you the same religion which He ordained for Noah, and that which we have revealed to you (O Muhammad), and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, to establish the religion and not be divided therein" (Qur'an 42: 13), as well as the verse which follows it, "And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them, out of jealous animosity between themselves. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord (postponing the penalty) until a specified time, it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt" (Qur'an 42: 14).

All of the prophets were sent to declare a single message, namely, that of Islam, which is "the only (true) religion in the sight of God." Those who received the earlier revelations, that is, the Jews and the Christians, are aware of the unity of religion, and they know that every one of the prophets came only to confirm the others in what they had declared about this self-same religion. It was not intended that people should divide themselves into different, conflicting doctrines; however, they differed, broke up their unity, and attributed to their prophets words which they had not spoken despite the understanding which they had been granted in this regard "out of jealous animosity between themselves," according to the words of God Almighty.

The Pre-Islamic Era
And the Surviving Traces of
The Original Abrahamic Religion

This topic represents still another vital introduction to the study of the prophetic biography and what it offers us by way of lessons and principles, since it reveals a reality which the opponents of Islam continue to obscure and distort with various falsehoods and deceptions. This reality, in short, is that Islam is nothing but an extension of the true religion with which God sent the forefather of the prophets, Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him. The book of God declares this straightforwardly in a number of verses. We read, for example, "And strive for God with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. (It is) the religion of your father, Abraham. He (i.e., God) named you Muslims before ..." (Qur'an 22: 78); and, "Say, 'God has told the truth. So, follow the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth; and he was not of the polytheists'" (Qur'an 3: 95).

My readers are most likely aware that the Arabs are the descendents of Ishmael, may blessings and peace be upon him. They inherited the religion of their forefather along with all that this entailed: belief in God's oneness, offering Him worship, obeying His commands, and respecting His taboos. One of the most important aspects of such a way of life was veneration for the Ka'bah, faithfully performing the rites associated with it, defending it, and serving as custodians of its sanctity and purity. However, like all nations and peoples when their vision is clouded by ignorance and their ranks are infiltrated by charlatans and falsifiers, they began over time to mix the truth to which they had fallen heir with numerous falsehoods and distortions which had penetrated their thinking. Polytheism entered their midst, they grew accustomed to the worship of idols, and they adopted vain traditions and corrupt morals. In so doing, they turned aside from the light of monotheism and from the path of the true religion of Abraham; ignorance spread and prevailed among them for long ages, until at last it was dispelled with the coming of Muhammad (pbuh).

The first person to introduce polytheism among them and draw them into the worship of idols was a man by the name of 'Amr Ibn Luhayy Ibn Qam'ah, the forefather of the Khuza'ah tribe. It was related by Ibn Ishaq on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn al-Harith al-Tamimi, who reported on the authority of Abu Salih al-Samman, who heard Abu Hurayrah saying, 'I heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) saying to Aktham Ibn Jawn al-Khuza'i, "Aktham, I saw 'Amr Ibn Luhayy Ibn Qam'ah Ibn Khunduf drawing his viscera through the fire. I have never seen a man resemble another more than you resemble him." Aktham replied, "Might it not be harmful to me to look so much like him, O Messenger of God?" "No," he replied, "You are a believer, while he was not. He was the first one to alter the religion of Ishmael: setting up idols, slitting she-camels' ears in preparation to devote them to such idols, as well as making other animal offerings to the gods." [13]

Ibn Hisham relates how this 'Amr Ibn Luhayy introduced the worship of idols among the Arabs, saying,

'Amr Ibn Luhayy departed from Mecca to Syria in order to attend to some affairs of his. When he came to Ma'ab in the land of al-Balqa', where there lived giants descended from a man by the name of 'Imliq Ibn Lawudh Ibn Sam Ibn Nuh, he saw them worshipping idols and asked, "What are these idols which you worship?" They replied, "These are idols which we worship because, when we pray to them for rain, they

grant us rain, and when we pray to them for victory, they grant us victory." He asked, "Will you not then give me one to take back to the land of the Arabs so that they can worship it themselves?" So they gave him an idol called Hubal. He took it to Mecca, set it up, and commanded the people to worship and adore it.[14]

The worship of idols spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and idolatry became a way of life for its inhabitants. In this way, they were estranged from the doctrine of monotheism and replaced the religion of Abraham and Ishmael with another, thereby following the path of other nations toward erroneous beliefs and wicked practices. What propelled them along this path was, first and foremost, ignorance and the influence of the various tribes and nations who surrounded them.

Nevertheless, there remained among them those who, though their numbers grew fewer with time, continued to cling to the creed of monotheism, treading the path of the true Abrahamic religion. These individuals believed in resurrection and divine judgment, and were assured that God rewards the obedient and chastises the disobedient. They detested the Arabs' newly adopted worship of idols, as well as their mistaken ways of perceiving and thinking. Numerous members of this group gained renown, including Qiss Ibn Sa'idah al-Iyadi, Ri'ab al-Shanni, and Bahira al-Rahib.

The customs of such individuals retained traces of the principles and practices of the true Abrahamic religion, although these had diminished and weakened with time. Hence, although they suffered from the same ignorance which afflicted those around them, their ignorance was, nevertheless, colored to some extent by the influences of these surviving elements of the Abrahamic creed. However, these practices and principles were visible in their lives only in a corrupt, distorted form. For example, they were familiar with the veneration and circumambulation of the Ka'bah, the major and minor pilgrimages, and the offering of sacrificial animals at the Ka'bah, since all of these things had been passed down to them from the covenant of Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him. However, they would perform such practices incorrectly, introducing into them numerous elements which had not originally been there. An example of this phenomenon may be seen in their invocation of the major and minor pilgrimages. The tribes of Kinanah and Quraysh used to say, "Here I am, O God, here I am. I respond to your call, O God. You have no partner but that partner which belongs to You! You possess him, but he never possesses You!" In this manner they used to declare God's unity, as Ibn Hisham notes, then bring their idols into the Ka'bah, declaring them to be under His authority and rule.

In sum, Arab history had its origin beneath the wing of the true religion which had been revealed to Abraham, the forefather of the prophets, may blessings and peace be upon him. Hence, as their history commenced, their lives were governed by the doctrine of God's oneness and the light of guidance and faith. After this, however, they gradually distanced themselves from this truth. As this occurred, their lives were filled instead with the darkness of polytheism, faulty thinking, and the waywardness of ignorance. At the same time, however, there remained traces of the ancient truth and its principles which, though they accompanied them on their path, as it were, nevertheless faded with time and saw their adherents grow fewer with every passing year.

When the flame of the true religion was ignited once again with the coming of the seal of the prophets, Muhammad (pbuh), the divine revelation effaced all the accretions of error and darkness which had accumulated over the ages, illuminating the places which they had occupied with the firebrand of faith, the affirmation of God's oneness, and the principles of justice and truth. At the same time, it picked up the traces of the true Abrahamic creed which had survived to see this new dawning of the light: affirming them, validating them, and renewing the call to embrace them.

It goes without saying that what we are affirming here will already be self-evident to someone well-versed in history, and intuitively clear to someone who has done some study of Islam. However, in this age in particular, we have no choice but to spend a great deal of time affirming and clarifying the obvious. We

have witnessed personally how some people subject their beliefs to the authority of their desires and wills. Indeed, people of this type exist, and it appears not to matter to them in the least that they are shackling their minds with the cruelest chains!

What a tremendous difference there is between letting your will be subject to your beliefs, and letting your beliefs be subject to your will. What a tremendous difference there is, indeed, with the former lifting one up to the loftiest heights, and the latter bringing one down to the depths of depravity!

Despite the self-evident nature of what we have stated and the clarity of the evidence in its support, there are those who will say that prior to the coming of the Prophet (pbuh), the pre-Islamic era had begun to experience an awakening to the path which ought, ideally, to be followed, and that Arab thought had begun rising up against the manifestations of polytheism and idol worship and its associated superstitions. Such people maintain, moreover, that this awakening found expression in the coming of Muhammad (pbuh) and his new message. What this claim means, as one can clearly discern, is that with the passage of time, pre-Islamic history was growing increasingly open to the truths of monotheism and to the light of right guidance. In other words, the further the Arabs departed from the covenant of Abraham and the more centuries separated them from the inception of the Abrahamic religion, the nearer they came to its message and its principles until, with the mission of the Chosen One (pbuh), this nearness reached its apex!

Is this, then, the verdict which would be handed down by history, or would even the most rudimentary understanding of its principles lead us to the very opposite conclusion? Every autonomous investigator or thinker knows that the era during which Muhammad (pbuh) was sent had departed further from the guidance which he had come to bring than any other pre-Islamic era, and that the principles of the true Abrahamic religion and its surviving traces on the Arabian Peninsula revealed themselves in fleeting outbursts of hatred and disdain for idols and their worship, and in an inclination toward some of the virtues and values affirmed by Islam. These remaining influences amounted to no more than a tiny fraction of what had been evident among the Arabs several centuries earlier; hence, based on these people's understanding of the meaning of prophethood and divine calling, we would expect Muhammad (pbuh) to have been sent several generations earlier!

Others, by contrast, prefer to claim that when Muhammad (pbuh) was unable to do away with most of the Arabs' familiar customs, traditions, rituals, and supernatural beliefs, he decided to clothe all these things in the garb of religion, interpreting them as divine mandates. In other words, he (pbuh) came to impose on the aggregate of beliefs held by the Arabs a kind of 'supreme supervision' in the form of a divine, omnipotent personality. Then, after the coming of Islam, the Arabs maintained their belief in magic, spirits, and other similar doctrines while, in addition, they carried on with practices such as the veneration and circumambulation of the Ka'bah and the performance of specific rituals relating to it.

Those who put forward this claim base it upon two assumptions, neither of which are they willing to subject to careful scrutiny. The first of these is that Muhammad (pbuh) was not a prophet; the second is that the surviving traces of the religion of Abraham of which we have spoken were nothing but the Arabs' own inventions and traditions which they had devised over time by dint of their own efforts. This being the case, the veneration of the Ka'bah was not an outcome of the God-given message of Abraham, the forefather of the prophets, may blessings and peace be upon him; rather, it was a simple outgrowth of the Arab environment, one among a number of various Arab conventions.

In order to maintain these two postulates and prevent them from being weakened or challenged in any way, their proponents close their eyes to all evidence and all the major historical events which stand to disprove them. However, it is a recognized fact that the search for the truth cannot possibly lead us to our aim so long as we will only move forward within the confines of that which conforms to our preconceived hypotheses. Such an investigation is nothing but a laughable exercise in futility. Hence, provided that we

are not simply after some subjective truth, and so long as we do not wish to lie either to ourselves or others - feigning a genuine, autonomous search for the truth in hopes of convincing others of a particular notion to which we are attached without regard for what link it bears to the reality of things - then we have no choice but to take into consideration all relevant evidence and historical events.

We cannot, for example, fail to give thought to the evidence for the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh), such as the phenomenon of revelation, the miracle of the Qur'an, the correspondence between his message and the messages of the prophets who had come before him, and his outstanding qualities and morals, simply in order to justify the assumption that Muhammad (pbuh) was not a prophet.

Nor can we close our minds to history, which bears witness to Abraham building the Ka'bah in response to a divinely revealed command, or to the entirety of the message brought by successive prophets, including the belief in God and His oneness and in the unseen realities relating to the Day of Resurrection, Judgment, Heaven and Hell, simply because we hope to support the assumption that what we call "the remains of the covenant of Abraham" in the pre-Islamic era were nothing but a set of conventions contrived by Arab minds, and that Muhammad (pbuh) came only to coat these with a veneer of religion. After all, these messages are included in the previous divinely revealed scriptures, and they have found verification both in history and in the consciousness of succeeding ages and generations.

It bears noting here that those who make such claims bring forth virtually no proof or evidence of any kind; rather, they do nothing but present their point of view in loose, abstract, repetitive phrases. An example of this phenomenon may be found in the book entitled, The Structure of Religious Thought by the renowned British Orientalist, H.A.R. Gibb. An examination of Gibb's thought will make clear the extent to which such people are affected by blind fanaticism, feigning stupidity in the face of the most obvious facts lest they be obliged to submit to them.

In Gibb's view, the structure of religious thought in Islam consists of the creeds and notions adopted by the Arabs relating to the unseen, and which Muhammad (pbuh) sought to reform by means of a kind of "Arab revivalism." According to Gibb's conceptualization, Muhammad (pbuh) reflected on such creeds and ideas, changing what he could and clothing the rest in the garb of religion, that is, Islam. He then proceeded to bolster Islam with a system of suitable religious ideas and attitudes. At this point, however, he encountered a dilemma, since he wanted to establish this new religious life not only for the Arabs, but for all peoples and nations; it was this which moved him to situate it within the framework of the Qur'an.

These, in short, are the thoughts which Gibb presents in his book. You may read it from beginning to end without finding a single piece of evidence for what he is saying. A bit of reflection on his claims will lead you to the conclusion that the man deposited his mental faculties somewhere far removed from the place where he sat down to write, replacing them with illusions and wild fantasies.

Moreover, it appears that when Gibb sat down to write the introduction to the book's Arabic translation, he imagined how thoroughly his readers would disdain these notions of his about Islam, so he proceeded to apologize! He states, "The ideas on which I have based these chapters were not the product of my own mind; rather, the way was prepared for me by a number of thinkers, among them certain leading personalities within Islam. Such thinkers are so numerous, I shall content myself with the mention of just one of them by way of example, namely, the great Sheikh Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi."

Gibb then proceeds to quote a passage from the writings of Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi, the reference for which he gives as Part I, p. 122 of al-Dahlawi's book, Hujjat Allah al-Balighah. He appears to have been confident that none of his readers would go to the trouble of referring to the book in question and verifying the text which he had quoted, since he freely distorts al-Dahlawi's words, making use of those phrases whose meaning and intent he can twist and misrepresent and putting words in the author's mouth, so to speak.

Gibb's distorted version of the passage in question is as follows:

The Prophet (pbuh) was sent with a message within a message; the first of these was addressed to the sons of Ishmael, which required that the content of the law which he brought be the same rites, customs of worship, and easements which they had, since the code which he brought was a reformation of what was already in their possession, not a mandate of which they were not familiar from the beginning.[15]

What follows is the complete text as it appears in Hujjat Allah al-Balighah, including the phrases which Gibb selected so as to distort their meaning:

You may be certain that he (pbuh) was sent with the true, original religion of Ishmael in order to straighten that which had grown crooked, to remove distortions which had entered into it, and allow its light to spread abroad. His message, as God Almighty says, was "the religion of your forefather, Abraham." Hence, it was necessary that the fundamental principles of this religion be acknowledged and its customs approved because, if a prophet is sent to a people who already possess the remnants of a rightly guided way of life, then there is no point in changing and altering it; rather, this way of life must be affirmed, since this is what their hearts will be most receptive to and it is this which will have the greatest credibility when they are held accountable on the basis thereof.

The sons of Ishmael had inherited the way of life brought by their forefather, Ishmael, and it was this way of life to which they adhered until the coming of 'Amr Ibn Luhayy, who introduced new elements based on his own misguided opinion. Going astray and leading others astray with him, he instituted the worship of idols, devoting various sorts of animal offerings to them, with the consequence that the religion was falsified, the authentic was confounded with the corrupt, and the people were brought under the power of ignorance, polytheism, and disbelief. It was for this reason that God sent Muhammad (pbuh) to restore them to a straight path and reform that which had been corrupted. To this end, he (pbuh) examined their law such that whatever aspects thereof were in conformity with the religion of Ishmael, may blessings and peace be upon him, or the rites previously revealed by God, he preserved, and whatever aspects of it represented distortions or corruptions thereof, such as rites associated with polytheism, he abolished and ensured the recording of this abolishment.

I am not making reference to the work of such a "researcher" and his distortions in order to discuss it, since it would be futile to enter into a discussion with such patent nonsense. Rather, my intent here is to make readers aware of the extent to which blind fanaticism can affect those who embrace this attitude. At the same time, I wish to acquaint them with what some Western scholars boast of by way of "objective" research methodology, and the extent to which some Muslims themselves have been influenced by blind, servile imitation.

Hence, readers should now be aware of the true nature of the link between Islam and the manner of thought which prevailed among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era, as well as the connection between the pre-Islamic era and the original, genuine religion with which Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him, was sent. On this basis one may discern the reason for which the Messenger of God (pbuh) approved a significant number of the customs and principles which were prevalent among the Arabs, whereas he abrogated others and even went so far as to declare war against them, doing everything in his power to bring them to an end.

With this we come to the conclusion of the prefatory discussions which we see as a necessary prelude to our study of the prophetic biography and our attempt to induce lessons therefrom. The chapters which follow will provide further evidence in support and clarification of what we have presented thus far.

Section Two
From Birth to Calling

The Prophet's Lineage, Birth and Childhood

With regard to the Prophet's (pbuh) lineage, he was known as Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abd al-Muhhalib (also known as Shaybat al-Hamd) Ibn Hashim Ibn 'Abd Manaf (whose name was also al-Mughirah) Ibn Qusayy (also known as Zayd), Ibn Kilab Ibn Murrah Ibn Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy Ibn Ghalib Ibn Fihr Ibn Malik Ibn al-Nadr Ibn Kinanah Ibn Khuzaymah Ibn Mudrikah Ibn Ilyas Ibn Mudar Ibn Nizar Ibn Ma'add Ibn 'Adnan.

This is the portion of his noble lineage which is agreed upon; anything beyond it, however, is subject to dispute. It is also agreed upon that 'Adnan was a descendent of Ishmael, son of Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon them both, that God chose him out of the most superior of all tribes, and that his ancestry was not tainted by the corruption of the pre-Islamic era. Muslim narrates on the authority of the Messenger of God (pbuh) that, "God chose Kinanah from the descendents of Ishmael; He chose Quraysh from Kinanah; He chose Hashim from Quraysh, and He chose me from among the sons of Hashim."

The Prophet (pbuh) was born in the Year of the Elephant, that is, the year in which Abrahah al-Ashram attempted to storm Mecca and raze the Ka'bah, whereupon God prevented him from succeeding by means of the dazzling sign described in the Qur'an (in Surah 105, "The Elephant"); this occurred in all probability on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) was born an orphan, since his father, 'Abdullah died when his mother was only two months pregnant with him. He was given into the care of his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muhhalib who, in accordance with the custom of that day, sought out a woman of the Bani Sa'd Ibn Bakr tribe by the name of Halimah Bint Abi Dhu'ayb to serve as his wet nurse. It is unanimously agreed among narrators of the prophetic biography that the area in which the Banu Sa'd lived was witnessing a year of drought which had taken its toll on both agriculture and stock farming. However, no sooner had Muhammad (pbuh) entered Halimah's household and suckled at her breast than her pasturelands turned lush and green, allowing her goats to come home with full bellies and udders brimful of milk.

The years which he (pbuh) spent among the Banu Sa'd likewise witnessed "the opening of the breast" incident related by Muslim,[16] after which he was restored to his mother at the age of five. However, when he was six years old, his mother died. Then, when the Apostle (pbuh) was eight years old, not long after he came under the guardianship of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muhhalib, the latter also passed away, and he came under the guardianship of his paternal uncle, Abu Talib.

Lessons and Principles

This portion of his life story embodies important principles and lessons which we may summarize as follows:

First: What we have presented concerning the Prophet's noble lineage makes it clear that Almighty God has distinguished the Arabs from all other people, and that He granted preference to the Quraysh tribe over all other tribes. This fact may be seen from a particular hadith related on the authority of Muslim, as well as a number of other hadiths which bear a similar meaning. Al-Tirmidhi relates that:

He (pbuh) once mounted the pulpit and said, "Who am I?" His listeners replied, "You are the Messenger of God, may peace be upon you." He said, "I am Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Muhhalib. When God created human beings, He divided them into two groups, making me a member of the best of these two; He then divided them into tribes, and made me a member of the most superior of them. He then divided them into households, of which he gave me membership in the best. He also gave me the purest spirit."[17]

It bears noting here that our love for the Messenger of God (pbuh) requires that we also love those among whom he appeared and the tribe into which he was born, not because of any particular merit enjoyed by its individual members or the race to which they belong, but due to the simple fact that the Qurayshite Arab household, as it were, has been honored by its association with the Messenger of God (pbuh). Nor is there any conflict between this and the fact that there are those among the Arabs in general, and the tribe of Quraysh in particular, who have strayed from Almighty God's path of righteousness and fallen short of the dignified behavior which God has chosen for His servants, since such waywardness and degradation have the effect of nullifying any association there may have been between them and the Apostle (pbuh).

Second: It is no coincidence that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was born an orphan and that not long after this, he lost his grandfather as well, the result being that his early upbringing took place far from both the tutelage and care of his father and the tender compassion of his mother. It was part of the divine wisdom that the Prophet (pbuh) should have had this particular sort of upbringing. One of the most salient aspects of this wisdom may be that in this way, it became impossible for prattlers to arouse suspicion in people's hearts or deceive them into believing that Muhammad (pbuh) had derived inspiration for his message from the guidance of his father and his grandfather, knowing as they did that 'Abd al-Muhhalib was a prominent figure among his people who had been honored with the task of providing food and drink during the annual pilgrimage season.[18]

It is only natural, of course, that a father or a grandfather should raise his son or his grandson in the ways he himself has inherited. Hence, lest others suspect that the Apostle (pbuh) had derived his message from these influential individuals, God in His wisdom willed that he should spend his early days in the steppes of Bani Sa'd, far from his entire family. Moreover, it is significant that the Apostle's paternal uncle Abu Talib, into whose care he was given following the death of his grandfather and who lived until three years prior to the Hejira, never embraced Islam, as if to prevent anyone from mistakenly imagining that his uncle had exerted some influence over his message, or that it was merely a matter of tribal and family loyalties or the desire for leadership or high position.

Thus it was that God in His wisdom willed for His messenger (pbuh) to be raised an orphan; for in this way, he was cared for by divine providence alone, far from the tender embrace which might have overindulged him or the wealth which might have pampered him to excess. In this way, he was protected from inclining toward the glory of wealth and prestige or from falling prey to the desire for preeminence and control; in this way, accordingly, others were prevented from confusing the sanctity of prophethood with worldly fame, or from thinking that he was feigning the former as a means of achieving the latter.

Third: As mentioned above, there is unanimous agreement among narrators of the prophetic biography that the pasturelands of Halimah of Banu Sa'd were restored to lush greenness after having been arid and desolate, and that her aging she-camel, whose udders had been devoid of so much as a drop of milk, were filled once again. This indicates the high station enjoyed by the Messenger of God (pbuh) with his Lord even when he was a young child much like other young children. One of the most salient manifestations of the honor which God had bestowed upon him (pbuh) was that, on this account, He thus honored the home of Halimah of Banu Sa'd. However, this should be no cause for surprise, since our Islamic law has taught us to pray for rain by seeking the blessing of the righteous, include the household of Muhammad (pbuh).[19] How much more, then, would we expect the place where the Messenger of God (pbuh) lived as a nursing infant at Halimah's breast to have been blessed and honored. Moreover, so long as everything is

in the hands of God, who alone is the Supreme Cause of causes, then it is only fitting that the Messenger of God (pbuh) should be at the forefront of causes for blessing and divine honor, since he is the expression of God's mercy to humankind. As God Almighty's manifest word declares, "And We have not sent you, (O Muhammad), except as a mercy to the worlds" (Qur'an 21: 107).

Fourth: The "opening of the breast" incident, which occurred while he (pbuh) was living among the Banu Sa'd, is considered a sign of his prophethood and evidence of God's having chosen him to carry out a task of great significance. This incident has been passed down through numerous sound chains of transmission, and on the authority of a large number of the Companions, including Anas Ibn Malik. Muslim relates in his Sahih:

As the Messenger of God (pbuh) was playing with the other young boys, Gabriel approached him and threw him to the ground. He then proceeded to open up his chest and remove his heart, after which he took out a clot of blood and said, "This was Satan's share of you." He then washed his heart with Zamzam water in a golden basin and put it back in place. The other boys came looking for his mother – that is, his wet nurse – shouting, "Muhammad has been killed!" As they received him, he was white as a sheet.[20]

The wisdom revealed in this incident is not, it would seem to me, the removal of some sort of "gland of evil" from the body of the Messenger of God (pbuh), since if the seat of evil in human beings were a gland in the body or a clot of blood somewhere, then the wickedest villain could become good merely by undergoing a surgical operation! Hence, it would appear that the divine aim to be found here is that of announcing the Apostle's advent to those around him, and preparing the way for his protection from error and the reception of divine revelation from the time he was young by physical means, in order that people might more readily believe in him and his message. If this be the case, then, it was a process of inward cleansing, but one which took this material, concrete form so that in this manner, it might be a kind of divine declaration which people could perceive with their senses.

Whatever the wisdom behind this event, one must not – given that this report has been demonstrated to be sound and reliable – search for ways in which we can deny its apparent meaning by resorting to far-fetched, awkward interpretations. Given the soundness and accuracy of this report, there is no basis for such an attempt but the weakness of one's faith in Almighty God. We must be aware that the criterion for the acceptability of a given report is the veracity of the account; for if the account's veracity is clearly established, then we have no choice but to accept it just as it is. Then, given our acceptance of the report, the standards on the basis of which we understand it are the denotations and rules of the Arabic language. The ideal in all speech is truth, and if it were permissible for every researcher and reader to divert speech away from its true meaning by means of various metaphorical interpretations so as to be able to choose whichever of them suited his fancy, language would be robbed of its value and meaning, and people would be lost in a conceptual maze.

Besides, one may ask: Why search for an interpretation that allows one to deny the truth? One would do so either out of a weakness in one's faith in God and/or a lack of certainty concerning the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) and the truth of his message; otherwise, what could be easier than to be convinced of everything that has been transmitted in a sound, precise manner, regardless of whether or not one understands the wisdom and explanations behind the events concerned?

His First Journey to Syria and His Toil to Earn a Living

When he (pbuh) was twelve years old, his uncle Abu Talib traveled to Syria on business with a group of other travelers, and he took the boy with him. When the caravan stopped at Bussrá, they passed by a monk known as Bahira, who was well-versed in the Gospel and in matters related to Christianity. While the travelers were there, Bahira took notice of the prophet (pbuh) and began speaking with him. He then turned to Abu Talib and asked, "What relation is this boy to you?"

"He is my son," he replied. (Abu Talib used to refer to him as his son out of his great love and concern for him.)

"He is not your son," said Bahira, "nor is his father alive."

"He is my nephew."

"What happened to his father?" the monk asked.

"He died when his mother was pregnant with him."

"You are correct," replied Bahira, "so take him back to his home country, and beware of the Jews, for by God, if they see him here, they will plot evil against him. This nephew of yours will be a person of great stature."

Thereupon, Abu Talib rushed him back to Mecca.[21]

As the Messenger of God (pbuh) entered the phase of young adulthood, he sought a means of earning a living and began working as a shepherd. He (pbuh) said of himself later, "I used to work for hire as a shepherd for the people of Mecca." [22]

At the same time, God preserved him from all of the waywardness to which young men are prone. He states

There were only two occasions on which I was about to take part in the sorts of things they used to do in the times of ignorance, but God prevented me. After this, I did not even so much as begin to engage in such things until God honored me with my message and mission. Once I told the boy who used to watch the sheep with me on the heights of Mecca, "Would you keep an eye on my sheep while I go into Mecca and spend the evening with the other young men?" He agreed to my request, so I went forth until I reached the first house in Mecca, where I heard the sound of musical instruments.

"What is this?" I asked.

"It's a wedding," people replied.

So I sat down to listen. But God sent me into a deep slumber, and I slept until I was roused by the heat of the sun. When I went back to my friend, he asked me what had happened, and I told him. I did the same thing one other night, but the same thing happened to me. After that, I never again did anything

untoward.[23]

Lessons and Principles

The hadith concerning Bahira and the Messenger of God (pbuh) has been related by most scholars and narrators of the prophetic biography and is included by al-Tirmidhi in an extended form based on the hadith of Abu Musá al-Ash'ari. This hadith indicates that the Jews and the Christians possessed knowledge of the coming of the Prophet (pbuh) and the signs which would accompany him based on reports of his coming and descriptions of him in the Christian and Jewish scriptures, evidence for the existence of which is abundant. An example of such evidence is the fact that the Jews used to seek victory over the Aws and Khazraj tribes by making reference to the Messenger of God (pbuh) prior to his coming, saying, "A prophet will be sent soon. We will follow him and kill you with his help, just as 'Ad and Iram were killed before you." When, later, they broke the covenant they had made with the Messenger of God (pbuh), God revealed the verse which says, "And when there came to them a Book (i.e., the Qur'an) from God confirming that which was with them - although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved in it; so the curse of God will be upon the disbelievers" (Qur'an 2: 89).

Al-Qurhubi and others relate that when God revealed the words, "Those to whom We gave the scripture know him (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) as they know their own sons. But, indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know (it)" (Qur'an 2: 146). 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab asked 'Abdullah Ibn Salam, a kitabi[24] who had embraced Islam, "Do you know Muhammad (pbuh) as you know your own son?" He replied, "Yes, and even better. God sent his faithful one (Gabriel) in His heaven to His faithful one on earth (Muhammad (pbuh)) bearing the very same features, so I recognized him. But as for my son, I can't even be certain what was done by his mother." Similarly, the reason for Salman al-Farisi's decision to embrace Islam was that he had been following the reports concerning the Prophet (pbuh) and his attributes in the Gospel, and from monks and scholars of the Christian scriptures.

This poses no conflict with the fact that many Christians and Jews deny this, and that the Gospels available at the present time are devoid of any reference to the Prophet (pbuh), since it is intuitively clear that such books would have been subjected to successive alterations and changes. As God Almighty states in His revelation,

And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine writ, (following) only wishful beliefs and depending on nothing but conjecture. Woe, then, unto those who write down, with their own hands, (something which they claim to be) divine writ, and then say, "this is from God," in order to acquire a trifling gain thereby; woe, then, unto them for what their hands have written, and woe unto them for all that they may have gained! (Qur'an 2: 78-79).

As for the Prophet's (pbuh) taking the initiative to herd sheep to earn his daily sustenance, it points to three significant realities:

The first of these realities is the keen sensibility with which God adorned the character of His prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His uncle had been providing him with consummate care, and in him the Prophet (pbuh) had a compassionate, tender-hearted father. Nevertheless, no sooner did he sense that he was capable of earning a living than he proceeded to do so, doing his utmost to alleviate whatever he could of the burden being borne by his uncle. The benefit which he gained from this work may have been of little significance as far as his uncle Abu Talib was concerned; it was, even so, an expression of gratitude and moral sensitivity, as well as a sign of his willingness to exert himself, his chivalrous nature, and the generosity with which he treated those around him.

Secondly, we learn here of the type of lifestyle which God Almighty desires for His righteous servants in this world. It would have been easy for divine providence to assure the Prophet (pbuh) everything he needed for a life of ease and luxury such that he would have had no need to experience the toil of herding sheep in order to earn his keep. However, God in His wisdom reminds us that the best wealth a person can possess is that which he has earned by the sweat of his brow, and in return for the service he has rendered his society and the human race, while the riches which come into our possession without our having to render any benefit to society in return for them are, in fact, destructive.

The third reality of which we are reminded here is the fact that if one bears a message to others, this message will cease to have any value to people if the one delivering it earns his living by means of it or receives gifts and charity in return for it. Hence, the one who brought the Islamic message was, of all people, the one we would most expect to rely for sustenance on his own efforts, lest he become indebted to anyone in this world and be hindered thereby from carrying out the word of truth without concern for what might happen to him personally. Moreover, although the Apostle (pbuh) had given no thought to such things at this early stage of his life, since he was not yet aware of the divine message he would be given or the mission he would be called upon to carry out, it remains true that the path which God set out for him reflected this divine wisdom. In short, God Almighty did not wish there to be anything in the life of the Prophet prior to his calling which might hinder the course of his mission following this call.

What the Prophet (pbuh) related about the way in which God protected him from committing any evil during his boyhood and youth clarifies two facts of the greatest importance. The first of these is that the Prophet (pbuh) possessed all the human qualities that other human beings do, including all of the various innate inclinations that young men find within themselves as part of their God-given natures. Like others, he knew what it felt like to want to spend an evening chatting and amusing himself with the enjoyment that such times can bring. The second fact is that, despite what we have just noted, God Almighty protected him from all forms of deviance and from everything which might be at odds with the requirements of the mission that God had prepared him to carry out. Even before he had received the divine revelation or the Islamic law to prevent him from acting on many of his desires, he found another, hidden, protector at work which kept him from pursuing those things which would not have been in keeping with his destined task of leading a life of unblemished nobility and virtue and of laying down the law of Islam. The fact that these two realities were embodied together in the Prophet (pbuh) is clear evidence that there was a special divine providence directing his path without the mediation of familiar causes such as education and guidance. After all, who was there to guide him along this path of purity when everyone around him, including his family, his companions, and his people as a whole, were strangers to such a way of life, straying far from such a course?

Hence, this special divine providence which made the youth of the Prophet (pbuh) a delicate trajectory of light traversing the darkness of the time of ignorance into which he had been born is one of the most brilliant signs of the meaning of the prophethood for which God had created him and of the burdens which He had prepared him to bear. It points clearly to the fact that his identity as a prophet was the basis for the formation of his personality, including his psychological, intellectual, and behavioral dispositions throughout life.

It would have been easy for the divine providence to ensure that the beloved Prophet (pbuh) was born free of all instinctual desires for the enjoyment of lusts and passions, as a result of which he would have had no urge to leave his comrade to care for the sheep with which he had been entrusted, then go off to the houses of Mecca in search of people spending the evening in empty prattle, diversion, and merrymaking. However, his urge to do so at this time of his life is a phenomenon of which examples may be found in virtually every people and age. Moreover, by virtue of the subtle divine providence which served to divert him (pbuh) from whatever was unfitting despite the presence of the natural urge to pursue such things, the wisdom of God Almighty was manifested in such a way that people would find it easier to believe in his

message without being held back by doubts and suspicions.

The Prophet's Trade With Khadijah's Wealth and His Marriage to Her

According to Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Hisham, Khadijah was a business woman of dignity and wealth who hired men to trade with her money, then recompensed them by granting them a share of the profits. When she heard that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was a man of truthful speech, integrity, and high morals, she sent to him asking him to take some of her money to Syria and trade with it there, promising him the highest commission she was accustomed to giving those who worked for her. Accepting her offer, Muhammad (pbuh) departed for Syria with Khadijah's servant, Maysarah. After meeting with even greater success than he had on previous journeys, he returned to Khadijah with double her usual profits. He (pbuh) fulfilled his commitment to her with such complete trustworthiness and honor, Maysarah was astounded at his (pbuh) moral stature, and reported this to Khadijah.

Impressed by his great integrity and perhaps somewhat amazed by the blessing she had received on his account, Khadijah offered herself to him in marriage through her friend, Nafisah Bint Maniyah. The Prophet (pbuh) accepted and spoke to his paternal uncles concerning the matter, after which they betrothed her to him with the blessing of her paternal uncle, 'Amr Ibn Asad. When they were married, the Prophet (pbuh) was twenty-five years old, and Khadijah was forty.

Prior to her marriage to the Messenger of God (pbuh), Khadijah had been married first to 'Atiq Ibn 'A'idh al-Tamimi, then to Abu Halah al-Tamimi, otherwise known as Hind Ibn Zurarah.[25]

Lessons and Principles

The Prophet's (pbuh) work as a merchant in Khadijah's employ was an extension of the life of toil which he (pbuh) had begun as a shepherd. However, as a result of the favor which Khadijah had shown toward the Prophet (pbuh), she continued to occupy a position of the highest esteem in his heart throughout his lifetime. It is recorded in the Sahihs of both Muslim and al-Bukhari that she was the best woman of her time without exception. Both Muslim and al-Bukhari also relate on the authority of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him, that the Messenger of God (pbuh) once said, "The best of its women was Maryam Bint 'Imran, and the best of its women was Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid."[26]

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate that 'A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, said, "I was never jealous of any of the Prophet's (pbuh) other wives except for Khadijah, even though I didn't know her. Whenever the Messenger of God (pbuh) slaughtered a ewe, he would say, 'Send it to Khadijah's friends.' One day I made him angry when I said, 'Khadijah!' He answered me, saying, 'I was provided my sustenance through her love!'"[27]

It is related by Ahmad and al-Tabarani based on the chain of narrators associated with Masruq, that 'A'ishah said, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) hardly ever left the house without mentioning Khadijah and praising her to the skies. One day he mentioned her, and I was so overcome with jealousy, I said, 'Wasn't she just an old lady that God has replaced with someone better?' Angered, he said, 'No, by God, He has not replaced her with anyone better! She had faith when all others denied the truth; she believed me when everyone else counted me a liar, she consoled me with her wealth when I was deprived by everyone else,

and she was the only one among my wives by whom God blessed me with a son."

With respect to the story of the Prophet's (pbuh) marriage to Khadijah, the first thing one notices is his lack of preoccupation with bodily pleasures. If he, like other young men his age, had been interested in such things, he would have sought out a woman who was younger than he or, at least, someone the same age. Hence, it becomes clear to us that he (pbuh) desired her simply for her virtue and nobility, which were so well recognized among the members of her community and people that she was known during the pre-Islamic era as "the chaste, pure one."

This marriage continued until Khadijah died at the age of sixty-five, at which time the Prophet (pbuh) was fifty years old. Nevertheless, he did not think during his years with Khadijah of taking another wife, despite the fact that it is between the ages of twenty and fifty that a man is most prone to the desire for women and will be most likely to consider marriage to several women at once to satisfy physical desires. Muhammad (pbuh) passed through this period of his life, as we have said, without taking either another wife or a concubine, even though had he had so wished, he could have done so without difficulty, and without thereby violating any recognized social convention. Moreover, this is the case despite the fact that when he married Khadijah, she was a widow, and was nearly twice his age.

Such considerations ought to suffice to silence those whose hearts are consumed with hatred toward Islam and the power which it possesses – be they Orientalists, evangelists, or those who follow slavishly in their footsteps. It is such people whom God Almighty likens to beasts which are "deaf... and dumb, and blind: for they do not use their reason" (Qur'an 2: 171). They imagine that in the Prophet's (pbuh) marriages they have found an Achilles' heel by means of which they can mar his (pbuh) reputation, portraying him as a lascivious man steeped in the pleasures of the body who, in both his home life and his public mission, possessed no purity of heart or spirit.

It is recognized (by many) that evangelists and the majority of Orientalists are the professional opponents of Islam, for whom maligning Islam is an occupation to which they have devoted themselves full-time and from which they earn their keep. As for those ingenuous folks who follow after them, most of them oppose Islam based on mere hearsay and tradition, without any interest in opening their minds to search or understand. Their opposition to Islam is based on nothing but the habit of imitation, on the order of a badge that someone pins on his chest for no reason but that he wants to be known for his association with a particular group. A badge, of course, is nothing more than a symbol; hence, such people's aversion to Islam is simply the symbol by means of which they declare their identity as those who have nothing to do with this Islamic history, and whose loyalty is to none other than the imperialistic way of thinking championed by evangelists and Orientalists. This, then, is the choice they have made prior to any search or attempt to understand. Indeed, their hostility toward Islam is not an intellectual endeavor for the purpose of research or discussion, but rather, a mere label with which they identify themselves among their own people and race.

When seen in another light, however – that is, when studied by the insightful Muslim with a well-grounded understanding of his religion and the biography of his prophet -- the subject of the Prophet's (pbuh) marriage can easily lead one to conclusions which are the very opposite of those supported by the adversaries of Islam. They want to present the Prophet (pbuh) as a lecherous man immersed in bodily pleasures, whereas in fact, the subject of the Prophet's (pbuh) marriage is, itself, sufficient evidence to prove the reverse! The lewd man does not remain chaste and pure of heart till the age of twenty-five in an environment like that of the Arabs of pre-Islamic times; on the contrary, such a person would have been carried away by the corrupt currents that surged around him. And still less would such a man, after such a long wait, agree to marry a widow nearly twice his age, then live with her without so much as looking at anyone else when other possibilities abounded and were within easy reach, and continue in this manner until he had passed out of his youth into middle age and even old age.

As for his subsequent marriages to 'A'ishah and others, each of these has its own story behind it, based on wisdom and causes which only serve to increase the Muslim's faith in Muhammad's (pbuh) greatness, lofty stature, and unblemished morals. Moreover, regardless of the wisdom and purpose behind such marriages, they could not possibly have taken place simply to fulfill his own wishes or sexual desires, since if this were the case, it would have made more sense for him to act on such desires at the time when they were at their peak, especially in view of the fact that when he was younger, he had been free of any preoccupation with his mission and its requirements and had nothing to distract or hinder him from fulfilling his natural, instinctual needs.

I see no need to engage in a lengthy defense of his (pbuh) marriage as some writers have done, since -- regardless of what Islam's adversaries would like others to think – I do not believe there to be any problem which would require such attention. As much as the adversaries of Islam aspire to confute its truths, they aspire even more to draw Muslims into a defensive discussion of their faith.

The Prophet's (pbuh) Part in Rebuilding the Ka'bah

The Ka'bah was the first edifice ever constructed in the name of God and devoted exclusively to His worship as the one, unique Deity. It was built by Abraham, forefather of the prophets, may blessings and peace be upon him, after the tribulation he had suffered due to his war on the idols and the destruction of their temples. He built it by inspiration from God Almighty, who commanded him to do so: "And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the Temple, (they prayed:) 'O our Sustainer! Accept Thou this from us: for, verily, Thou alone art all-hearing, all-knowing!'" (Qur'an 2: 127).

The Ka'bah subsequently suffered a number of misfortunes which weakened it and cracked its walls. One such misfortune was a torrential flood which swept through Mecca several years before the Prophet's (pbuh) calling. Due to the resulting cracks in the walls and the weakening of its foundations, the Quraysh tribe had no choice but to rebuild it due to the Ka'bah's enduring sanctity and holiness. The veneration of the Ka'bah is one aspect of the way of life which had been established by Abraham, may peace be upon him, among the Arabs.

When the Apostle (pbuh) was thirty-five years old, and prior to his calling, he took an active part in the rebuilding of the Ka'bah, moving stones on his shoulder with nothing to protect his skin from the stones but his izar. [28] Al-Bukhari relates a hadith narrated by Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah, may God be pleased with him, who said, "When the Ka'bah was built, the Prophet (pbuh) and al- 'Abbas began moving stones. As they were working, al- 'Abbas said to him (pbuh), 'Put your izar over your neck.' So he (pbuh) prostrated himself on the ground, looked heavenward and said, 'Show me my izar.' Then al- 'Abbas bound it tightly around him."

The Prophet (pbuh) played an important part in solving a problem which arose as a result of a dispute among the various tribes over which of them merited the honor of putting the Black Stone in place. Beloved and trusted as he was by all, everyone accepted the suggestion which he proposed as a solution to the dilemma.

Lessons and Principles

In my commentary on this section of the prophetic biography, I would like to note the following four points:

First: The importance of the Ka'bah and the sanctity with which God invested it. As evidence of this, suffice it to note that the person who initiated its construction was Abraham, God's beloved friend, in obedience to a command from God Almighty, to be the first edifice devoted to the worship of God alone and a place of return and refuge for people. This does not, however, require that the Ka'bah have any particular effect on those circumambulating it or spending time inside it since, despite its sacredness and importance in the sight of God, it remains a physical object which has no power of its own to bring harm or benefit.

When God Almighty sent Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him, He commanded him to destroy idols and false deities, raze their temples and abolish their worship. At the same time, however, God in His

wisdom required that Abraham construct an edifice which would serve as a sign of the divine oneness and the necessity of worshipping God alone. Such a place would remain throughout the ages as an expression of the true meaning of religion and worship and the falsehood of all idolatry. Human beings had spent a considerable period of time pledging their devotion to stones and false deities and building places of worship on their behalf, and the time had now come for them to realize the futility of all such practices and to replace these idols' temples with this new symbol.

Here was a place of worship where people would stand in a place of dignity and honor, subservient to no one but the Creator of the entire universe. Hence, if those who believed in the oneness of God and who had come into His religion were in need of a common bond and a place to which they could return time and time again no matter how distant or disparate their homes, races and languages might be, then there could be no more fitting house – one which had been established as a symbol of the oneness of God and in response to the futility of polytheism and idol worship – to fulfill this function. This was the beacon which, however many false gods might be set up or figures deified in vain with the passing of the ages, would serve to embody Muslims' unity throughout the world and point to the oneness of God and His worship.

Herein lies the significance of God's words, "And (mention) when We made the House (i.e., the Ka'bah) a place of return for the people and (a place of) security. And take (O believers), from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer" (Qur'an 2: 125). This is the truth which comes to be recognized by pilgrims who, as they circumambulate the Ka'bah, are filled with a sense of the worship of Almighty God and the desire to fulfill His commands. It is on this basis that the Ka'bah acquired such a position of honor in the sight of God Almighty, and that God's servants were required to make pilgrimage there and perform the associated rites.

Second: The significance of the successive processes of destruction and reconstruction which the Ka'bah has undergone. All in all, the Ka'bah has been built at least four times. The first time, which is documented clearly in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, was when Abraham and his son Ishmael, may blessings and peace be upon them, built it in obedience to a divine command. We read in the Qur'an, "And (mention) when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and (with him) Ishmael, (saying), "Our Lord, accept (this) from us. Indeed, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower" (Qur'an 2: 127). As for the Sunnah, it includes many relevant hadiths related by al-Bukhari with a chain of authority based on the accounts of Ibn 'Abbas. One such account reads as follows:

Then he – that is, Abraham – said, "O Ishmael, God has given me a command."

"Then do as He has commanded you," he replied.

"Will you help me?"

"Yes, I will."

"God has commanded me to build a house right here," said Abraham, pointing to a certain hill. So the two of them raised the foundations of the house, with Ishmael bringing the stone and Abraham doing the building.[29]

Based on a passage taken from al-Azraqi's History of Mecca, al-Zarkashi relates that Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him, made the Ka'bah seven cubits in height, thirty cubits in length, and twenty-two cubits in width, and that he left it without a roof.[30] According to al-Suhayli, it was nine cubits in height,[31] which I suspect is more accurate than the figure given by al-Azraqi.

The second time the Ka'bah was constructed was when the tribe of Quraysh rebuilt it prior to the coming

of Islam with participation by the Prophet (pbuh), as we have mentioned. On this occasion, they increased its height to eighteen cubits and reduced its length by six cubits, leaving part of one cubit in the stone.[32] In this connection, it was reported by 'A'ishah that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "'A'ishah, were it not for the fact that your people only recently emerged from a time of ignorance, I would order that the Ka'bah be torn down. Then I would restore what has been removed from it (i.e., its length), I would give it an East door and a West door, and I would cause it to rest on the foundation laid for it by Abraham."[33]

The third time was when the Ka'bah caught on fire during the caliphate of Yazid Ibn Mu'awiyah when his armies stormed it from Syria. In the latter part of 36 A.H., Yazid sent his men out against 'Abdullah Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca under the command of al-Husayn Ibn Numayr al-Sakuni. Besieging Ibn al-Zubayr and attacking the Ka'bah with mangonel, they caused it to collapse and go up in flames. Following this, Ibn al-Zubayr waited until the people came during the pilgrimage season, then consulted them, saying, "Advise me concerning the Ka'bah: Shall I raze it, then rebuild it, or shall I simply repair whatever parts of it have been weakened?" Ibn 'Abbas replied, "I think you should just repair whatever parts of it have been weakened, leaving the same house whose stones have witnessed people's submission to God." Ibn al-Zubayr then said, "If one of you saw his own house burn down, he would not be satisfied until he had rebuilt it from the ground up. So how much more would this be true of the house of your Sustainer?! I shall pray to my Lord for guidance three times, then do what I must." Three days later, he proceeded to raze it to the ground. He then set up pillars around it and lowered curtains over them. When they erected the building, Ibn al-Zubayr had them add the six cubits which had been removed from its length and add ten cubits to its height. He also added two doors, one to serve as an entrance, and the other as an exit. What gave him the courage to make these additions was the aforementioned hadith on the authority of 'A'ishah.[34]

As for the fourth time, it followed the death of Ibn al-Zubayr. Based on a chain of authorities going back to 'Aha', Muslim relates that when Ibn al-Zubayr was killed, al-Hajjaj wrote concerning this to Caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, informing him that Ibn al-Zubayr had rebuilt the Ka'bah in a manner which met with the approval of those of good repute in Mecca. 'Abd al-Malik wrote back, saying, "What Ibn al-Zubayr did is of no concern to us. Approve whatever increase he made in its height; as for the stones which he added to the structure, return them to where they were before, and close off the door which he made." Hence, he tore it down and rebuilt it.[35]

It is said that (Harun) al-Rashid had decided to tear the Ka'bah down once more and rebuild it the way Ibn al-Zubayr had done. However, Malik Ibn Anas, may he rest in peace, said to him, "I urge you for God's sake, O Commander of the Faithful, not to turn this house into a plaything for kings who come after you. If this happens, then whoever so wishes will change it however he sees fit, and people will lose their reverence for it." In this way, he dissuaded the caliph from what he had intended to do.[36]

These, then, are the four occasions on which we know for certain that the Ka'bah was built. As for the fifth occasion, which is subject to dispute, it has to do with the period before it was built by Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him. The question is: Was the Ka'bah built prior to this, or not?

According to some accounts, the first person to build the Ka'bah was Adam, may blessings and peace be upon him. The most well-known of such accounts is that of al-Bayhaqi in his book, Dala'il al-Nubuwah ("Signs of Prophethood") based on the hadih of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr, who said:

The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Gabriel was sent by God Almighty to Adam and Eve to tell them to build Him a house. He then instructed them in how to do so. Adam began to dig while Eve brought (the stones) until he hit water. A voice then called to him from below, saying, "That will suffice, Adam." When they had finished building it, God inspired them to perform a circumambulation around it. Adam was told,

"You are the first of all people, and this is the first house." The centuries passed until Noah, may blessings and peace be upon him, went on pilgrimage there, then still more centuries passed until Abraham raised its foundations.

Al-Bayhaqi adds, "Ibn Lahi'ah is the only narrator to relate this hadith, which he traces back to the Prophet (pbuh); however, it is a known fact that Ibn Lahi'ah is a weak narrator who cannot be relied upon."

There are other accounts and reports which are close in meaning to the one related by al-Bayhaqi; however, all of them contain elements which are weak or incorrect. It is also said that the first person to build the Ka'bah was Seth, may blessings and peace be upon him.

The Ka'bah, then, if we approve these weak accounts and reports, may be said to have been built five times in all. However, it is preferable to approve only that which has been established with certainty, namely, that it has been built four times. As for other times, either prior to or between the occasions we have described, we must leave knowledge of them to God alone, recognizing, of course, that it has undergone various repairs and renovations since the last time it was rebuilt.

Third: The Prophet's (pbuh) great sagacity in disposing of affairs, providing leadership in the face of difficult issues and bringing an end to disputes. Such disputes included controversies among peoples who would periodically be at odds with each other (such as the various sub-tribes of Quraysh), but whose differences which would generally die down before they had led to bloodshed. Nevertheless, as my readers may be aware, one such dispute nearly led them to war. The tribe of 'Abd al-Dar had brought a bowl filled with blood and, together with the men of 'Adi, placed their hands in the bowl and concluded a pact to defend one another to the death, if need be. The greater tribe of Quraysh remained in this state of discord for four or five days without any opinion or solution bringing them to agreement until the flames of strife were finally put out by the Prophet (pbuh).

This virtue on his part, however, is something which we must attribute, not so much to the genius with which he had been born as to the God-given destiny which he had been given, namely, to bear the burden of prophethood and the mission this brought with it. As we have noted above, the primary element in the formation of his (pbuh) personality was that he was a messenger and a prophet, with all of his other qualities, including his genius and his perceptivity, being based on and subordinate to this foundation.

Fourth: The elevated status which he (pbuh) enjoyed among the men of Quraysh of all classes and ranks. He was known among them as "the faithful one", and was beloved by all. No one would have doubted his word if he spoke, the purity of his morals if he acted, or his integrity if others sought out his help or placed their trust in him. Facts such as these reveal the intensity of the malice and willfulness which filled the hearts of these same men who, after he had received a message from God and had begun delivering it to his people, received him with disbelief, obduracy, and ill will.

The Prophet's
Seclusion in the Cave of Hira'

When the Prophet (pbuh) was nearly forty years old, he developed a fondness for periodic retreats. Having been given a particular love for the cave of Hira' – which was located in a mountain northwest of Mecca – he used to seclude himself there and spend night after night devoting himself to worship. Such periods of seclusion would last anywhere from ten days to an entire month, after which he would return home; then, after staying there only a short time, he would prepare himself for still another retreat and return to Hira'. His life continued in this fashion until, during one such time of solitude, the divine revelation came to him.

Lessons and Principles

The retreats which became so dear to the heart of the Messenger of God (pbuh) prior to his calling have great significance for the lives of Muslims in general, and in particular for those who labor to call others to faith. They make it clear that no matter how virtuous a Muslim may be or how diligently he pursues the life of worship, his faith will never be complete until he adds to these things hours of seclusion in which he calls himself to account, contemplates God Almighty, and reflects on the ways in which God's majesty is evidenced in the phenomena of the universe. This holds true for any Muslim who wishes to submit himself fully to God, and even more so to those who wish to call others to faith in God and guide them onto the path of truth.

The wisdom to be seen here is that our souls are afflicted with maladies which can only be cured by the balm of seclusion from other people, and by a self-examination which takes place far from the hubbub of the world. Arrogance, vanity, envy, hypocrisy, and worldliness are all maladies which can gain control over one's soul and work their way into the depths of one's heart. Not only so, but they accomplish their destructive work in a person's inward being in spite of all he may display outwardly by way of righteous works and acts of pious worship, and in spite of the efforts he may be making to call others to faith and provide them with correct guidance and admonition. The only way in which such disorders can be treated is for one to be alone with himself from time to time so as to contemplate who he really is, his origin, and the extent of his need for God Almighty's care and support every moment of his life. Similarly, one needs to reflect on people's weakness and impotence before the All-powerful Creator, and on the uselessness of looking either to their praise or criticism. Let such a person ponder the manifestations of God's grandeur, the day of judgement, the greatness of the divine mercy and the severity of divine retribution. With unhurried, repeated reflection on such realities, the maladies which cling to the soul will fall away one after the other, and the heart will enter the light of knowledge and tranquillity such that the turmoil of the world will no longer have power to cloud its mirror, so to speak.

Another thing which is of the utmost importance in the life of Muslims, and particularly in the lives of those who seek to propagate the faith, is nurturing the love of God in one's heart. This love is the fountainhead of all sacrifice and struggle for God's sake, and the foundation for every sound, impassioned mission. The love of God does not arise from a merely intellectual faith, since the matters of the mind alone have never had the capacity to influence the emotions and the heart. If this were the case, the Orientalists

would be in the forefront of those who believe in God and His Messenger, and their hearts would be the most aflame with love for them. But have you ever heard of a scientist who sacrificed his life for the sake of a mathematical principle or an algebraic formula?!

Rather, the path to the love of God, in addition to faith in Him, consists in frequent meditation on His signs, blessings, majesty and greatness, as well as frequent remembrance of Him both in our hearts and with our tongues. These practices are reinforced primarily by means of periodic retreats from the distractions and clamor of everyday life. If the Muslim does this, a passionate love for the divine will take root in his heart, a love which will cause him to deem even the greatest worldly events as matters of little significance. Despising the world's enticements, such a person is able to make light of any harm or suffering which life might bring and rise above all humiliation and ridicule. This is the equipment with which God fitted out His beloved Muhammad (pbuh) to enable him to undertake the burdens of the Islamic mission.

The reason for this is that the impulses of the heart, including love, hope and fear, accomplish that which abstract intellectual understanding will never be capable of. Al-Shahibi, may he rest in peace, hit the mark when he distinguished with respect to such impulses between ordinary Muslims, who perform what is required of them but no more, and those select few who are driven by something more powerful than mere comprehension. He says:

The first group are those who labor by virtue of the covenant of Islam and the obligations imposed by faith, but who do no more than this; the second are those who labor under the impetus of fear and hope, or love. Fear is the slave driver's whip, as it were, while hope may be likened to a camel driver who leads the camels forward with a song. Love, on the other hand, is a current that carries one away with it.

The fearful person labors with a sense of strain and difficulty; however, the fear of that which is more burdensome moves him to endure hardships which, even though they may be toilsome, are still easier than the burden he might have borne in other, more difficult conditions. The hopeful person also labors with a sense of strain and difficulty; however, the hope of complete relief encourages him to endure even the worst affliction.

As for the lover, he labors by exerting his utmost effort out of longing for the beloved, with the result that difficulties are made easy for him and even the most elusive aspiration is rendered attainable. His strength may be spent, yet he still does not believe he has done all that love requires or that he has been sufficiently thankful for the blessings he has received.[37]

All Muslims would agree on the necessity of making use of the various means to achieve such spiritual goals. This process is referred to by most scholars and researchers as Sufism; it is also referred to by some as ihsan, that is, the sincere worship of God, and by others, such as Ibn Taymiyah, may he rest in peace, as the science of behavior. The solitude practiced by the Prophet (pbuh) prior to his calling is one means toward the realization of such aims.

However, one must not understand this sort of seclusion as a total withdrawal from other people, taking caves and mountains for one's abode and considering this to be a virtue in and of itself. This understanding is out of keeping both with the guidance given to the Prophet (pbuh) and with the way of life pursued by most of his Companions. Rather, what is meant here is the desirability of practicing solitude as a remedy whose purpose is to correct one's spiritual condition. As with any other remedy, it should only be used in limited amounts and when required; otherwise, it may itself turn into a malady from which one needs to be cured. Hence, if certain saintly figures in the history of Islam have continued in seclusion, this is due to something particular to these individuals, and should not be taken as a model which others are expected to follow.

The Beginning of the Revelation

Al-Bukhari relates an account which originated with 'A'ishah, who describes how the revelation began, saying:

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) first began receiving visions from God, it was when he was asleep, and when he saw them, they would come like the break of dawn. He was then given a love for seclusion, and he would go on retreats to the Cave of Hira', where he would devote himself to worship for several days and nights at a time, after which he would return to Khadijah and ready himself for still another retreat. He continued in this manner until the truth came to him in the Cave of Hira'. (The Prophet related that) the angel of revelation came to him and said, "Read," to which he replied, "I do not know how to read."

(The Prophet (pbuh) then related), "He then seized me and pressed me to himself until all the strength went out of me. Then he released me, saying, 'Read!' to which I replied again, 'I do not know how to read!' He seized me once more and pressed me to himself. Then he released me and said, 'Read in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created – created man out of a germ-cell! Read – for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught (man) the use of the pen – taught man what he did not know!'"

After this, the Apostle (pbuh) came home with a trembling heart. Coming in to where Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid -- may God be pleased with her – was, he said, "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" So they wrapped him in a blanket until he had come out of his fright. He then told Khadijah what had happened, saying, "I was afraid for myself!"

"No, by God, there is no need to fear," she replied, "for God would never put you to shame. You are the one who faithfully visits his kith and kin, bears up the weak, provides for those who have nothing, receives guests with hospitality, and helps others to cope with tribulation."

She then took him to Waraqah Ibn Nawfal Ibn Asad Ibn 'Abd al- 'Uzzá, who had embraced the Christian faith during the Islamic era,, was literate in the Hebrew language and used to write down whatever he could of the Christian scriptures in Hebrew. By the time the Prophet (pbuh) received the revelation, Waraqah was advanced in years and had lost his sight.

"Cousin," Khadijah said to him, "Listen to what your nephew has to say."

"Son of my brother," he said to him, "What have you seen?"

So the Messenger of God (pbuh) reported to him what he had seen.

Waraqah responded, "This is Gabriel, the Archangel of Revelation, who descended upon Moses. Oh, how I wish I were still a youth so that I could live to see the day when your people expel you from their midst!"

"Is that what they are going to do?" asked the Messenger of God (pbuh).

"Yes," Waraqah told him, "No one has ever brought the likes of what you have brought without being treated as an enemy. But if I do live to see your day, I will lend you my full support."

Soon thereafter, Waraqah died and the revelation ceased to come.

There is some disagreement as to how much time elapsed before the revelation began to come again; some say it was three years, while others say it was less than this. The most probable figure, however, is that given by al-Bayhaqi, namely, six months.[38] Al-Bukhari relates a hadith on the authority of Jabir 'Abdullah concerning the period during which the revelation came. Jabir relates that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "As I was walking along, I heard a voice coming from heaven, so I looked up and saw the same angel who had come to me at Hira'. He was seated on a throne between heaven and earth, and I was terrified at the sight of him. So I went back, saying, 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' It was then that God Almighty revealed the Qur'anic verses, 'O you, who covers himself (with a garment), arise and warn, and your Lord magnify, and your clothing purify, and uncleanliness avoid'" (Qur'an 74: 1-5). After this, the revelation began descending with frequency and regularity.

Lessons and Principles

This hadith concerning the beginning of the revelation is the foundation upon which the entire religion rests, including its doctrines and laws. An understanding of this hadith and firm certainty of its reliability are thus a necessary precondition for certainty concerning everything else brought by the Prophet (pbuh), including both reports of unseen realities and legislative precepts. The reason for this is that the reality of "revelation" is the sole element by which one can distinguish between someone who thinks his own thoughts and legislates on the basis of his own opinion and judgment, and someone who delivers a message from his Sustainer without seeking to change it in any way.

It is for this reason that those who make it their profession to fill others with skepticism about Islam are particularly interested in the topic of revelation in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). Through forced interpretations and artful ruses, such individuals do everything in their power to obscure the reality of revelation and cause others to confuse it with merely human inspiration, auto-suggestion, and even epilepsy, since they are aware that the reality of "revelation" is the source of Muslims' faith in what was brought by Muhammad (pbuh). If they could make Muslims doubt this reality, they could, likewise, persuade them to reject virtually all of the doctrines and precepts which follow therefrom. In so doing, they would be preparing the ground for the acceptance of the notion that what Muhammad (pbuh) called others to embrace by way of legal principles and rulings was nothing but a product of his own subjective thought processes.

To this end, professional champions of the intellectual invasion have attempted to "reinterpret" the phenomenon of revelation, distorting the intent of the accounts passed down to us by historians and by the narrators of the well-attested prophetic Sunnah and denying the plain, literal truth of such reports. In so doing, each of them has given his imagination free rein to fabricate the most bizarre, affected notions. There are those, for example, who imagine that Muhammad (pbuh) continued to think until, by a process of gradual disclosure, he formulated a doctrine which he believed would be capable of doing away with idolatry; others promote the claim that he (pbuh) learned the Qur'an and the principles of Islam from Bahira the monk; while still others hold that he (pbuh) was simply a nervous man afflicted with epilepsy.[39]

When we examine this extraordinary, cunning propaganda for which no reasonable person would see any justification except as a means of avoiding the acknowledgment of his (pbuh) prophethood, we realize clearly the divine wisdom in the fact that the revelation descended on him (pbuh) in the manner related by al-Bukhari.

Why is it that the Messenger of God saw Gabriel with his own two eyes the first time, even though it would have been possible for the revelation to come to him from behind a veil, as it were? Why did God strike terror in his heart and allow him to be confused as to how to understand this, even though the evident love

which God had for His Messenger and the manner in which He had preserved him from harm thus far would have led him to expect such a revelation to reassure and encourage him? And why was he afraid for himself, suspicious that what had appeared to him in the cave might be an apparition from the world of demons, rather than thinking it more likely that this was a trustworthy angel from God? Moreover, why was the revelation withheld from him for such a long period of time after this – a fact which caused the Prophet (pbuh) such distress that, according to al-Bukhari, he used to consider throwing himself down from the tops of mountains?

These are questions which naturally arise when one reflects on the form in which the revelation commenced. However, upon consideration of the answers to such questions, we find that they contain brilliant wisdom, since they offer truths which can prevent the unbiased thinker from falling prey to the professional champions of the intellectual invasion of the Muslim world or being influenced by their futile, pretentious delusions.

When Muhammad (pbuh) was in the Cave of Hira', he was taken by surprise when he found Gabriel standing before him in full view; hence, it is clear that the phenomenon of revelation was not merely a subjective occurrence resulting from some sort of internal dialogue. Rather, it was the reception of an external reality which had nothing to do with the private workings of his mind. Similarly, Gabriel's seizing the Prophet (pbuh) and pressing him to himself, then releasing him, saying to him each time, "Read!" may be viewed as confirmation that what was taking place was the reception of something objective and external, lest anyone suppose that it was nothing but a figment of his imagination.

The Prophet (pbuh) was terrified by what he had seen and heard, so much so that he cut off his retreat in the cave and went rushing back home with his heart pounding. Any rational thinker who ponders this fact will understand that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was not anticipating the message which he would be called upon to bear and spread throughout the world, and that this phenomenon of revelation did not fit neatly into some scheme which he already had in mind. Rather, it entered his life in the most unexpected, disturbing way. Hence, it is a certainty that this was not the situation of someone who engages in steady thought and contemplation until he arrives at a doctrine which he believes he ought to call others to embrace!

A further consideration in this regard is that cases of inspiration, auto-suggestion, spiritual illumination or transcendental meditation do not give rise to fear and dread. There is no correspondence between a process of evolving thought and contemplation on one hand, and sudden fear and panic on the other; otherwise, the majority of thinkers and contemplatives would be subject to unforeseen bouts of panic and alarm. Even if we were to assume the impossible, namely, that the Prophet (pbuh) would have been capable of engaging in deceit, or that he underwent a complete reversal in the character which he had been known to have prior to his calling, the fact remains that such phenomena as fear, alarm, bodily tremors and altered skin color are all involuntary responses which cannot possibly be affected.

We get an even clearer sense of the frightening surprise which he (pbuh) experienced if we ponder the fact that he imagined that the figure he had seen in the cave, and which had embraced him and spoken to him, had come from the world of the jinn. As we have seen, he told Khadijah, "I was afraid for myself" – that is, of harm by the jinn. However, she reassured him that due to his virtuous morals and praiseworthy qualities, he was not someone who could be harmed by demons or jinn.

God Almighty would have been capable of setting the Prophet's (pbuh) mind at rest, reassuring him that this being who had spoken to him was none other than Gabriel, one of His angels who had come to inform him that he was God's messenger to people. However, the divine wisdom required that there be an unmistakable break between Muhammad's (pbuh) personality prior to his calling and what it became afterwards, thereby making it clear that virtually no aspect of the Islamic doctrine or code of legislation was hatched in the mind of the Apostle (pbuh), and that he had had no prior conception of the calling he

was to receive.

The manner in which God inspired Khadijah to take him (pbuh) to Waraqah Ibn Nawfal and present the matter to him is still further confirmation that what had given him such a shock was, in fact, the divine revelation which had descended upon the prophets before him. This, in turn, served to lift the cloud of confusion which had been hovering over him, causing him fear and uncertainty as to how to interpret what he had seen and heard.

As for the subsequent discontinuation of the revelation for a period of time and the Prophet's (pbuh) having to wait for six months or more before receiving any further revelations, this in itself constitutes a miracle, since it provides the most eloquent possible response to those who wish to view the prophetic revelation as nothing but a kind of inward illumination deriving from prolonged contemplation, that is, a subjective occurrence which simply arose from within him. It was decreed by the divine wisdom that the angel who had once appeared to him in the Cave of Hira' should be withheld from him for a long time, and that he should suffer intense anxiety on this account. His anxiety was so great, in fact, that he began to fear that God Almighty had abandoned him due to some evil he had committed. He suffered such torment over this that whenever he found himself on a mountain top, he was tempted to throw himself down from it. One day, however, he saw the same angel that he had seen at Hira'. His form filling the expanse between heaven and earth, he said, "O Muhammad, you are God's messenger to people." Once again, he came home overcome with fear and dread. It was at this time that the verses, "O you, who covers himself (with a garment), arise and warn" (Qur'an 74: 1-2) were revealed to him.

Given this state through which the Messenger of God (pbuh) passed, it would be foolishness even so much as to consider the possibility that the revelation which he received was nothing but a subjective inspiration, since it goes without saying that one who experiences this sort of inspiration or who engages in intellectual thought is not subject to such states. Hence, the fact that the revelation began in the manner described in the well-attested hadith cited above undermines all of the arguments employed by skeptics in order to plant doubts in people's minds concerning the revelation and the prophethood with which God honored Muhammad (pbuh). Once this becomes clear to you, you will recognize the greatness of the divine wisdom which caused the revelation to commence in this very manner.

Such skeptics may then ask: Why is it, then, that when the revelation descended upon him on later occasions while he was in the presence of his Companions, no one but he was able to see the angel? The answer to this question is that it is possible for something actually to exist without its being visible to the human eye. After all, the sense of sight is subject to specific limitations; otherwise, it would be necessary for something to cease to exist as soon as it was removed from our range of vision. However, for God – the Creator of all sight – it is a simple matter to give some eyes the ability to see that which others cannot. Malik Ibn Nabi notes in this regard, that color-blindness provides us with a model case, in which some eyes are incapable of seeing certain colors. There are also certain infra-red and ultra-violet rays which our eyes are unable to perceive. However, there is nothing to prove scientifically that they are invisible to all eyes. On the contrary, there may be eyes which possess greater or lesser degrees of sensitivity.[40]

As for the subsequent continuation of the revelation, it likewise provides evidence that this revelation was a reality and not, as some skeptics would like to believe, nothing but a psychological event. This evidence may be summed up as follows:

1- The clear distinction between the Qur'an and the hadiths. The Prophet (pbuh) used to instruct others to record Qur'anic revelations immediately, whereas he contented himself with having his Companions commit hadiths to memory. The reason for this is not that the hadiths were his own words and had nothing to do with prophecy but, rather, because when the Qur'an was revealed to him by Gabriel, may peace be

upon him, this revelation included the very words and letters of which the message consisted, whereas in the case of the hadiths, their meaning had been revealed by God Almighty, but the words and phrases in which this meaning was expressed were supplied by the Prophet (pbuh). Consequently, he was always wary of allowing the words of God Almighty which he had received from Gabriel to be confused with his own speech.

2- When the Prophet (pbuh) was asked about particular matters, he would sometimes not reply immediately. Instead, a long period of silence might follow; then, when a verse of the Qur'an was revealed to him concerning the question, he would summon the person who had asked it and recite to him whatever had been revealed to him in answer to it. In other cases, he (pbuh) would take a particular action in response to a situation, after which verses of the Qur'an would be revealed in order to dissuade him from acting in this manner, or perhaps even to reprimand him.

3- The Messenger of God (pbuh) was unlettered. Now, it would not be possible for a person to become aware of historical facts, such as the story of Joseph, or of the mother of Moses when she cast her newborn into the water, or the story of Pharaoh, by means of mental telepathy, as it were. This, then, represents still another aspect of the divine wisdom revealed in his having been unlettered: "And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand. Then (i.e., otherwise) the falsifiers would have had (cause for) doubt" (Qur'an 29: 48).

4- The Prophet's (pbuh) honesty and integrity over a period of forty years and the reputation which he enjoyed among his people as a result of this required him (pbuh) to be truthful, first and foremost, with himself. Hence, he must, through his study of the revelatory event which he had experienced, have overcome any doubts which had come into his mind. The following verse seems to have been revealed in response to his initial self-examination in relation to the revelation he had received: "So if you are in doubt (O Muhammad), about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters" (Qur'an 10: 94). It is related that following the descent of this verse, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "I will not doubt, nor will I question."

Section Three
From Calling To Emigration

The Phases of the Islamic Mission in the Life of the Prophet (pbuh)

The Islamic mission in the life of the Prophet (pbuh), from the time he received his calling until his death, passed through four phases:

Phase One, which lasted for three years, involved the call to embrace Islam in secret.

Phase Two, which lasted until the Hejirah, or emigration to Medina, involved an open call to embrace Islam by means of verbal persuasion alone.

Phase Three, which lasted until the year in which the Truce of Hudaybiyah was concluded, was that of a public call to embrace Islam, together with the commitment to fight those who attacked the Muslim community or committed evil against them.

Phase Four likewise entailed the public call to embrace Islam, but with the commitment to fight everyone who sought to hinder the Islamic mission and all polytheists, atheists, and idol-worshippers who, after being informed about Islam and its meaning, still refused to embrace it. This final phase represents the mandate which Islamic law has recognized ever since, and which forms the basis for the ruling on jihad in Islam.

The Call to Islam in Secret

As the Prophet (pbuh) began carrying out God's command, he called others to worship God alone and to turn away from idols. However, he did so covertly lest his message come as a shock to the people of Quraysh, who were fervent devotees of their idols and their pagan worship. Given this fact, he (pbuh) did not openly declare his message in Quraysh's general assemblies; rather, he spoke only with those who were near of kin or who had known him before this time.

Among those who first embraced Islam were: Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Zayd Ibn Harithah, the Prophet's slave and adopted son,[41] Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Quhafah, 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn 'Awf, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, and others, may God be pleased with them all. All of these individuals used to meet with the Prophet (pbuh) in secret, and if any of them wanted to engage in worship, he or she would go out to one of the mountainous areas surrounding Mecca in order not to be seen by the people of Quraysh.

When the number of Muslims had reached approximately thirty, including both men and women, the Messenger of God (pbuh) decided to make the house of one of them, a man by the name of al-Arqam Ibn Abi al-Arqam, a meeting place where he could give them guidance and instruction. During this period, nearly forty men and women entered Islam, most of them being poor, slaves, and others who enjoyed no power or prestige among the people of Quraysh.[42]

Lessons and Principles

1 The importance of secrecy at the beginning of the Apostle's (pbuh) mission

There is no doubt that the Prophet's (pbuh) secretiveness with respect to his propagation of Islam during these early years was not due to any fear for himself. On the contrary, when he was assigned this mission and received the command, "O you, who covers himself (with a garment), arise and warn .." (Qur'an 74: 1-2), he knew he was God's messenger. Consequently, he was confident that the God who had sent him forth and given him this mandate was able to protect him from people, and if God had commanded him to carry out his mission in an open, public manner from the very beginning, he would have done so without a moment's hesitation, even if he had known that it would lead to his death.

However, Almighty God inspired him – inspiration being, in the case of the Prophet (pbuh), a type of revelation given to him – to begin the call to Islam in a hushed manner, as it were, speaking only to those people whom he judged most likely to accept and believe in his message. In so doing, he (pbuh) offered instruction and guidance to those proponents of Islam who would follow him, since he demonstrated the legitimacy of taking all necessary precautions and employing whatever means are indicated by sound reason and careful thought in order to achieve the aims of the Islamic mission. However, such precautions must never take precedence over reliance upon God alone, nor should anyone cling so tightly to such actions that they are seen as the primary influence over events. Such an attitude offends against the principle of faith in the omnipotent God and, therefore, is inconsistent with the very nature of the call to embrace Islam.

This being the case, you can see that during this phase of his mission, the Prophet (pbuh) adopted an

approach in which he established a precedent for legitimate Islamic practice in his capacity as imam, and not in his capacity as a prophet whose actions are inspired by God and are, therefore, models which it is incumbent on others to follow. Hence, it is permissible for those engaged in the propagation of Islam, in whatever age they happen to live, to employ flexibility in the manner in which they carry out this mission, be it clandestinely or openly, by means of gentleness or force, allowing their approach to be determined by the requirements of circumstances and the conditions in which they are living. This is a flexibility provided for by Islamic law based on the four aforementioned phases of the Prophet's (pbuh) own mission, the guiding criterion being Muslims' well-being and the interests of the Islamic mission.

For this reason, there is general agreement among scholars of Islamic jurisprudence that if Muslims are so few in number or so ill-equipped that they are likely to be killed without being able to inflict any harm on the enemy in the case of an outbreak of hostilities, then self-preservation is to be given priority over the preservation of the religion, since fulfillment of the former interest is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the latter. Judging it to be impermissible to engage in battle under such circumstances, al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd al-Salam states, "If no harm can be done (to the enemy), then defeat is inevitable since so much life will be lost (on the part of the Muslims), while those bent on denying the truth will remain unscathed and, at the same time, maintain power over the followers of Islam. In such circumstances, then, standing one's ground against the enemy is a source of destruction and does not serve (the Muslim nation's) interest in any way."[43]

I stated above that the interest of self-preservation is to be given priority; however, it is given priority in appearance only, for in reality, when one examines the matter in terms of its long-term significance, one sees that by preserving Muslims' lives, one is, in fact, preserving their religion as well. The religious interest requires, in such a case as this, that Muslims remain alive in order for them to be able to move forward and struggle on other fronts which remain open. Otherwise, their demise would cause harm to the religion itself, opening the way for those bent on denying the truth to take over areas of life which had been closed to them.

In conclusion, then, it is necessary that Muslims keep the peace or maintain secrecy in their pursuit of the Islamic mission if going to war or undertaking this mission openly would do it harm. If, however, it is possible to propagate the Islamic message openly and if it is beneficial to do so, then it is not permissible to do so in secret. Nor is it permissible to keep the peace with wrongdoers and those who lie in wait for an opportunity to inflict harm on Muslims and their religion if the means of exercising force and defending themselves are available, or to refrain from fighting against those bent on denying the truth on their own territory if such an avenue is open to them.

2) The first Individuals to embrace Islam, and the divine wisdom behind their entering Islam before others

The prophetic biography tells us that those who entered Islam during this period were, for the most part, a motley group of poor, weak, and enslaved individuals. What could be the wisdom behind the Islamic state being founded upon the likes of these people?

The answer is that this same phenomenon has been the natural outcome of the call issued by every one of the prophets in its initial phase. Note, for example, how Noah's people used to condemn him because the only people who followed him were the basest, most common folk: "So the chiefs among his people said, 'We see you but a man like ourselves, nor do we see you followed except by those who are the lowest among us and they (too) followed you without thinking. And we do not see in you any merit above us; rather, we think you are liars'" (Qur'an 11: 27). Note, similarly, how Pharaoh and his followers used to view the disciples of Moses as contemptible and weak. After speaking to us about the death of Pharaoh and his retinue, God says, "And We caused the people who had been oppressed to inherit the eastern regions of the land and the western ones, which We had blessed" (Qur'an 7: 137). And consider the people of Thamud, to whom God sent the prophet Salih; their leaders were so full of pride, they spurned him, while

the weak and oppressed believed in him: "The leaders of those who were arrogant among his people said to those who were counted weak - to those who believed among them, 'Do you (actually) know that Salih is sent from his Lord?' They said, 'We indeed believe in that with which he has been sent'. Those who were arrogant said, 'Indeed, we disbelieve in that which you believe in'" (Qur'an 7: 75-76).

The secret behind this is that an essential element of the religion with which God sent His prophets and messengers is the act of coming out from under the authority of human beings and coming under that of God alone. This is a reality which offends, first and foremost, against the supposed divinity of those who have been divinized, the authority of those who exercise control, and the pride of those who have set themselves up as leaders, while it accords perfectly with the condition of the oppressed, humiliated, and enslaved. Hence, the reaction to the call to submit oneself to God alone will be contemptuous opposition and intransigence on the part of those who have been divinized and who occupy positions of control, and glad surrender on the part of the weak and tyrannized.

This fact is revealed clearly in the conversation which took place between Rustum, commander of the Persian army during the battle of al-Qadisiyah, and Rib'i Ibn 'Amir, a humble soldier in the army of Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas:

Rustum said to him, "What led you to wage war on us and enter our territory?"

Sa'd replied, "We have come to release anyone who wishes to be released from the worship of human beings so as to worship God alone."

Then, looking in astonishment at the ranks of men kneeling to Rustum's right and left, he said, "We used to hear wondrous stories about you and your people, but I have never seen a people more foolish. We Muslims do not enslave one another, and I thought that you and your people assisted one another the way we do. It would have been better if you had informed me that some of you lord it over others."

The oppressed common people then turned to each other and whispered amongst themselves, "By God, this Arab speaks the truth!"

As for the leaders and commanders, they were smitten by Rib'i's words as if it were a thunderbolt, and said to each other, "His words have aroused unfulfilled hopes and longings in our subjects!"[44]

This does not mean, however, that the oppressed people who first entered Islam did so, not out of sincere faith, but simply out of a desire to free themselves from the harm being inflicted on them by those who exercised authority over them with such arrogance. After all, faith in the one God and belief in the message brought by Muhammad (pbuh) were common to both them and the leaders of Quraysh, not one of whom was unaware of the Prophet's (pbuh) veracity in what he had reported concerning his Lord. However, the leaders and men of note among them were held back from following and obeying him (pbuh) by their positions of leadership. The most salient example of this is his (pbuh) own uncle, Abu Talib. As for the poor and oppressed, there was nothing to prevent them from responding to their faith and obeying him (pbuh) without hesitation. Their new-found faith in the divinity of God alone rendered them indifferent to any authority or power other than His, and this confidence filled them with strength, exhilaration and joy.

Such considerations reveal the seriousness of the calumny engaged in by some of the "professionals" responsible for the current intellectual invasion of the Muslim world, who claim that the mission undertaken by Muhammad (pbuh) simply represented the movement being witnessed by Arab thought at that time. For if this were the case, we would not find that even three years after the beginning of his (pbuh) mission, no more than forty men and women had accepted his message, most of them poor, oppressed, slaves, and bondservants, foremost among them a motley assembly of non-Arabs such as Suhayb al-Rumi and Bilal al-Habashi.

As will become clear as we proceed further in this study, it was this very Arab environment which obliged

the Prophet (pbuh) to emigrate from his home country, and which forced his followers to take refuge in Abyssinia and disperse elsewhere as well. Such things occurred due to the hatred of those who surrounded the Prophet (pbuh) for the message he had brought -- the very message by which some claim that Muhammad (pbuh) was giving voice to his society's thoughts and aspirations.

Open Issuance of the Call to Islam

Ibn Hisham writes, "Then people began entering Islam in such numbers – both men and women – that word of Islam spread throughout Mecca. God then commanded His messenger to act on the truth he had received, approaching people with the command to worship God alone. Three years passed from the time when God first granted His revelation to the Prophet (pbuh) and the time when He commanded him to make this message known publicly, saying, "Hence, proclaim openly all that you have been commanded (to say) and turn away from the polytheists" (Qur'an 15: 94), and "And warn (O Muhammad) your closest kindred" (Qur'an 26: 214-215).

It was at this time that the Prophet (pbuh) began carrying out his Lord's command, "Hence, proclaim openly all that you have been commanded (to say) and turn away from the polytheists." Ascending al-Safa, he would call out, saying, "O sons of Fihr! O sons of 'Adi!" until they had gathered, while anyone who was unable to come out would send a messenger to see what was taking place.

The Prophet (pbuh) said to them, "Have you not observed how, if I told you that a cavalry was in the valley getting ready to raid you, you would believe me?"

"We have never known you to lie," they responded.

"So then, I am here to warn you of a grievous chastisement."

A man by the name of Abu Lahab then said, "Fie on you! Why do you waste our time? Is this all you've gathered us for?"

It was in this context that the following words were revealed, "Doomed are the hands of Abu Lahab, and doomed is he" (Qur'an 111: 1).[45]

Then the Apostle (pbuh) responded to God's words, "And warn (O Muhammad) your closest kindred" (Qur'an 26: 214) by gathering around him all his relatives and all members of his clan, saying, "O sons of Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of Murrah Ibn Ka'b, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of 'Abd Shams, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of 'Abd Manaf, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of 'Abd al-Muhhalib, save yourselves from the Fire. O Fahimah, save yourself from the Fire, since I have no power to protect any of you from God. As your relative, I shall fulfill my earthly duties toward you, but beyond that, you are answerable to God alone." [46]

In response to this public call to Islam, the people of Quraysh turned away from the Prophet (pbuh) and spurned his message, their excuse being that they could not abandon the religion which they had inherited from their forefathers and which had become a tradition in their lives. When this occurred, the Prophet (pbuh) alerted them to the necessity of freeing their minds from slavery to imitation and dependence on others. God Almighty says of them, "And when it is said to them, 'Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger,' they say, 'Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers.' Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided" (Qur'an 5: 104).

When he (pbuh) found fault with their gods, pointing out the foolishness of their dreams and aspirations

and discounting their excuses for clinging to the worship of idols by describing their ancestors as mindless, they woke up to the seriousness of the matter and joined forces against him. The only people who did not join them were those whom God restrained from doing so by bringing them into Islam, as well as his uncle Abu Talib, who continued to be solicitous toward the Prophet (pbuh) and sought to protect and defend him.

Lessons and Principles

This chapter of his (pbuh) life presents us with three facts of significance which we may summarize as follows:

First: When the Messenger of God (pbuh) issued the call to Islam among the tribe of Quraysh and other Arabs, he took them completely by surprise. This fact may be seen clearly in Abu Lahab's response to him, and in the agreement reached by most of the polytheists from among the leaders of Quraysh to counter him and treat him as an enemy. This fact serves as a definitive rebuttal of those who seek to depict this religion, together with all of its rulings and laws, as a fruit of Arab nationalism, and who allege that in the message which he preached, Muhammad (pbuh) was simply giving expression to the Arabs' hopes and aspirations at that time.

Those who examine the Prophet's (pbuh) biography have no need even to respond to this laughable allegation. Those who put it forward are well aware of its senselessness and falsity; however, they see such a claim as necessary in order to prevent Islam and its authority from standing in the way of other principles and ideas. After all, the promotion of a claim does not require that it be true; rather, what matters is simply that it serve its proponents' interests and aims. In this connection, you will recall the detailed treatment which we accorded this topic in the introduction to this study.

Second: It would have been possible for God to command His messenger simply to carry out the mission he had been given among people in general rather than specifying that he first warn his closest of kin, since the members of his family and his clan would, of course, be included among those who were to receive his message. What was the wisdom, then, in this command being limited first to his (pbuh) own clan?

The wisdom behind this command lies in the fact that it points to the levels of responsibility born by every Muslim, and particularly by those who engage in the wider propagation of Islam. The lowest level, as it were, is a person's responsibility for himself; it was in order to do justice to this level of responsibility that the period in which the revelation first began lasted for as long as it did, that is, until Muhammad (pbuh) could reassure himself that he was, indeed, a prophet sent by God, and that what was descending upon him was none other than a revelation from God Almighty. In this way he could first be certain that he himself believed, then make ready to accept all of the principles, laws, and precepts which he would receive.

The second level is the Muslim's responsibility for his family and those next of kin for whom he is responsible. In order to guide us to the fulfillment of this responsibility, God has specified one's immediate family and relatives as those who must be warned first. Every Muslim who has a family and relatives has a share in bearing the burdens entailed by this level of responsibility; in this respect, the Apostle's (pbuh) issuing the call to Islam among his people is similar to the Muslim's calling his family and relatives to submit themselves to God. The only difference between them lies in the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) established a new law which had been revealed to him by God Almighty, whereas the ordinary Muslim seeks to spread the message which he has received from the Prophet (pbuh). Just as a prophet or messenger would not be allowed to refrain from informing his people of what had been revealed to him, neither is the head of a family allowed to refrain from informing his family of this same revelation; on the contrary, he must employ every means at his disposal to persuade them to obey this message, making them fully aware of their obligation to do so.

As for the third level, it is the responsibility of the scholar for his neighborhood or town, and the ruler's responsibility for his state and his people. Each of them is the legal heir, vicegerent, and representative of the Prophet (pbuh) in this regard. As he (pbuh) stated, "Scholars are the heirs of the prophets." Hence, knowledge and understanding are necessary for both the imam and the ruler, since there is no essential distinction between the responsibility assigned to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and that assigned to scholars and rulers except for the fact that, as we have noted above, the Messenger of God (pbuh) delivers a new law which has been revealed to him by God Almighty, whereas scholars and rulers simply follow in his (pbuh) footsteps, guided by his wisdom and adhering to his example in all that they do and say.

The Prophet (pbuh), then, bore responsibility for himself in his capacity as a human being with the obligation to obey God; he bore responsibility for his family and relatives in his capacity as a head of household and one with an extended family; and he bore responsibility toward all people in his capacity as a prophet sent by Almighty God. The first level is shared in common by the Prophet (pbuh) and everyone with the obligation to obey God; the second is common to him (pbuh) and everyone who has a family; while the third is shared in common with him (pbuh) by scholars and rulers.

Third: The Messenger of God (pbuh) took his people to task for enslaving themselves to traditions that they had inherited from their forefathers without giving thought to how valid or invalid these might be. He called upon them to free their minds from the habit of blind obedience and bigoted attachment to traditions which are not based upon a foundation of sound reason.

This, in turn, serves as evidence that the underpinning for this religion, including both its doctrines and precepts, is none other than the mind and reason, and that the aim behind adherence to it is the best interests of humankind, both in this world and the next. Hence, one of the most important conditions for the soundness of one's faith in God and whatever other beliefs are associated with this is that such faith rest on a foundation of certainty and free thought which is unconstrained by convention or tradition. In his well-known poem in the rajaz meter, the author of Jawharat al-Tawhid says:

If one mimics others in professing the unity of God,

His faith will be tainted with redundancy.

From this it becomes clear that the religion of Islam came to declare war on traditions insofar as these arise from blind mimicry, since this religion – in all its principles and precepts – is based on the foundation of sound intellect and reason, whereas "traditions" in this sense are founded on nothing but the desire to imitate and follow, that is, without any role being given to the element of inquiry and independent thinking. After all, the word "tradition" may be defined, based on the insights of both philologists and social scientists, as the sum total of the customs which have been inherited from former generations, or which maintain their validity simply by virtue of the social contact which takes place in a particular environment. As such, the element of sheer imitation is the central nerve which extends through such customs, both giving them life and enabling them to survive.

Everything people have grown accustomed to in their societies – ways of life, the forms of entertainment they engage in during times of happiness, and how they express mourning in times of misfortune and sadness – is part of what has been handed down from times of old, or what has been adopted unthinkingly through influence or contact with others; and it is all these things together which are referred to by both linguists and sociologists as "traditions."

Once you know this, you will realize that Islam cannot possibly involve anything by the name of "traditions", whether these have to do with doctrine or with its various laws and regulations, since its doctrine is based on the foundation of sound reasoning, while its regulations rest on the foundation of temporal and eternal interests. Although such interests may not be comprehended by some for this reason or that, they are, nevertheless, understandable through thought and careful reflection.

This, in turn, reveals the seriousness of the error committed by those who employ the phrase "Islamic traditions" to describe Islam's various forms of worship, legislative rulings, and moral precepts. The propagation of this unfair designation may suggest to people that the value of Islamically sanctioned morality derives not from its embodying a divine principle which contains the secret of happiness for the human race – as, in fact, it does – but rather, because the Islamic law and system of morality are customs which were inherited from previous generations. If this suggestion is taken seriously, it is bound to cause people to feel oppressed by this "antiquated" heritage which others wish to impose on society in an age in which everything is highly developed, advanced, and modern.

The application of the term "Islamic traditions" to the various precepts of Islam is not, however, an innocent mistake; rather, it is one link in a series of attacks being waged on Islam by means of empty, misleading slogans. The primary aim behind the promotion of the term "Islamic traditions" is to produce an association in people's minds between the meaning of "tradition" in its negative sense, and Islam's various rules and precepts. When this occurs, people forget that these rules are, in essence, principles based on sound reason and inquiry, and they become a weak point which is vulnerable to the arrows and spears of Islam's foes. All the precepts and laws brought by Islam are, in essence, principles, and a principle is something which is founded on sound thought and reason and which aims to accomplish a specific end. Now, although principles of merely human origin may or may not hit their mark due to misconceptions on the part of their originators, the principles of Islam never miss their mark, since the One who established them is the Creator of all minds and thoughts.

Muslims may find that some of Islam's principles and precepts -- such as those relating to marriage and divorce, the woman's modest mode of attire and so forth -- have been clothed in the garb of "traditions." If this happens, then it is only natural that they should find some people calling for the repudiation of such "traditions" and emancipation from the "slavery" which they impose, especially in this age of ours which is dominated by the quest for freedom of opinion and thought. However, as we have stated, the fact is that in Islam, there are no traditions. Rather, as we have seen from our examination of the earliest days of the Prophet's mission, it is a religion which came to deliver the mind from the grip of tradition. As for traditions, they are simply behavioral trends in which people get unthinkingly swept away out of the human desire to imitate.

It is principles which must regulate development over time, not vice-versa. As for traditions, they might be likened to fungi that grow up by themselves in the midst of society's intellectual fields. They are the weeds that must be uprooted, and from which sound thought must be freed.

Persecution

As time went on, the Qurayshites showed increasing hostility toward the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his companions. Of the numerous kinds of harassment which he (pbuh) suffered at their hands, one example is that related by ʻAbdullah Ibn ʻAmr Ibn al-ʻAs, who said:

We saw the Prophet (pbuh) praying at "Ishmael's precinct"[47] when ʻUqbah Ibn Abi Muʻayh approached and placed his robe around the Prophet's (pbuh) neck, then tightened it forcefully as if to strangle him (pbuh). Then Abu Bakr approached, grabbed the man by the shoulders and pushed him off the Prophet (pbuh), saying, "Will you kill a man simply because he says, 'My Lord is God?'"[48]

Another such incident is related by ʻAbdullah Ibn ʻUmar, who said, "We saw the Prophet (pbuh) performing a prostration as people from Quraysh stood around him. ʻUqbah Ibn Abi Muʻayh then came along carrying the placenta of a slaughter camel and hurled it onto the Prophet's (pbuh) back. As for the latter, he did not raise his head. Fahimah, may God be pleased with her, then came and removed it from his back, cursing the person who had done this."(1) In addition, there are the various sorts of ridicule and insults to which he (pbuh) used to be exposed whenever he walked among them or passed by them in their streets or gathering places.

According to accounts related by al-Tabari and Ibn Ishaq, someone once took a handful of dirt and threw it onto his (pbuh) head as he walked through one of the streets of Mecca. When he returned to his house with the dirt still on his head, one of his daughters came and washed it off. As she wept, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said to her, "Daughter, do not weep. God will protect your father."[49]

As for his Companions, may God be pleased with them all, every one of them experienced some sort of torment, with some of them dying or going blind under torture. However, this did nothing to turn them away from the religion of God. If we were to narrate examples of the torment suffered by each of them, this study would grow far too long. However, allow us here to relate the account narrated by al-Bukhari on the authority of Khabbab Ibn al-Aratt, who said,

I came to the Prophet (pbuh) as he lay in the shade of the Kaʻbah, resting his head on his outer garment. By this time we had suffered a great deal at the hands of the polytheists, and I said, "O Messenger of God, are you not praying to God for us?"

He sat up, red in the face, and said, "Before you, there were believers who, even though their flesh and their very nerves were flayed with rakes of steel, could not be persuaded to give up their faith. God will most assuredly bring Islam to such completion that a rider will be able to travel from Sanʻa' to Hadramawt with nothing to fear but God Himself!'"[50]

Lessons and Principles

The first question which might occur to someone who reflects on the persecution endured by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his Companions at the hands of the polytheists is: What was the reason behind all of this suffering when they were in the right? Given that they were God's soldiers with His messenger in their midst, calling others to submit to Him and striving on His behalf, why did God not protect them from such things?

The answer to this question is that the most fundamental characteristic of human beings is that they are under mandate, as it were. That is, they are called upon by Almighty God to bear that which involves some degree of discomfort and hardship. Issuing the call to submit oneself to God alone and entering into the holy struggle devoted to spreading this message are among the most important outgrowths of this mandate. Faith in and service to the Creator, which are necessary consequences of an awareness of His divinity, may He praised and exalted, have no meaning if they involve no mandate or obligation.

Our status as servants of God, then, necessarily entails our being under mandate to obey Him, while this mandate, in turn, necessitates that we endure certain hardships. Similarly, it requires that we enter into a struggle against those aspects of our selves which are prone to selfishness and against our enslavement to desires and passions. To this end, the duty of God's servants in this world is to achieve two aims: (1) To cling to Islam and establish a sound Islamic society; and (2) To tread those arduous paths which lead to this goal, passing boldly through places of danger and spending of their substance in order to do so. In other words, the Omnipotent God has mandated us to embrace faith in the end, as well as to embrace the laborious means to this end, no matter how long it takes to reach it, and no matter how perilous or difficult the course.

If God had so willed, He would have made the path leading to the establishment of a truly Islamic society easy and smooth. However, if He had done so, then treading this path would offer no evidence that those who tread it are His servants, that when they declared their faith in the Supreme One, they sold themselves to Him, body and soul, or that all their desires and passions have now become subordinate to that which was brought by the Apostle (pbuh). In other words, if the path were smooth and effortless, there would be no way to distinguish between the genuine believer and the hypocrite, or between the sincere and the insincere.

Hence, the difficulties faced by those who call others to obedience to the one God and those who struggle for the sake of establishing an Islamic society are expressions of the divine law which has been at work in the universe ever since the dawn of history. This divine law is based on three truths:

Human beings' inescapable identity as servants of God Almighty, as God says, "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Qur'an 51: 56).

The mandate which is an outgrowth of this servanthood. There is no man or woman who, once having reached the age of discretion, is not mandated by God Almighty to fulfill the law of Islam both in his or her own life and in society, realizing that this will mean having to endure hardship and pain toward these ends.

The necessity of revealing the distinction between the integrity of the truthful and the falsehood of the hypocrite. If people were allowed simply to claim that they love God and have submitted themselves to Him, there would be no distinction between the honest person and the liar. However, trials and tribulations are the measure by which these two types are distinguished. Truly does God speak when He says, "Alif, Lam, Mim. Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: 'We believe,' and will not be tested? And We indeed tested those who were before them. And God will certainly make known (the truth of) those who are true, and will certainly make known (the falsehood of) those who are liars" (Qur'an 29: 1-3), and when He says, "Do you think that you will enter Paradise before God tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those who are patient?" (Qur'an 3: 142).

This, then, is God's law for His servants, a law in which you will find no change even when it applies to His prophets and saints. Therefore, the Messenger of God (pbuh) was persecuted, as were all the prophets and messengers before him, and as were the Prophet's (pbuh) Companions, some of whom died and others of whom lost their vision under torture, despite their great virtue and their honored status before God Almighty.

If we understand the nature of the suffering encountered by the Muslim who treads the path toward the

establishment of an Islamic society, we will realize that such suffering is not, as some people mistakenly imagine, an obstacle or impediment which would prevent the spiritual traveler from reaching his destination. Rather, it is simply a natural result of the Muslim's traversing his or her God-ordained path. In other words, the more Muslims suffer as they travel the path God has set before them and the more martyrs among them fall, the more closely they approach the end which He has mandated them to strive for.

Therefore, no Muslim ought to lose hope if he suffers some degree of hardship. On the contrary, this sort of suffering is in complete accordance with the nature of this religion. Whenever Muslims find themselves enduring harm and misfortune as a result of their quest to carry out the commands of their glorious Sustainer, they should rejoice in their approaching victory. Reflect well on this matter, which you will find supported clearly in God's statement:

(But) do you think that you could enter paradise without having suffered like those (believers) who passed away before you? Misfortune and hardship befell them, and so shaken were they that the apostle, and the believers with him, would exclaim, 'When will God's succour come?' Oh, verily, God's succour is (always) near!"(Qur'an 2: 214).

There were those who did not understand the nature of Islamic action, mistakenly imagining that the persecution and torment which they were experiencing was an indication that they were far from attaining victory; however, God replied to their concern by saying, "Oh, verily, God's succour is (always) near!"

Further evidence of this may be seen in the story which we related above on the authority of Khabbab Ibn al-Aratt, may God be pleased with him, when he came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) feeling defeated and overwhelmed by the torment which had left its marks on most of his body. When he complained to him (pbuh), asking him to pray that the Muslims would be granted victory, the Messenger of God's (pbuh) reply was as if to say, "If you are perplexed and overwhelmed by the persecution and torment which you have had to endure for the sake of God Almighty, then be assured that this, indeed, is the path. This is God's way of dealing with all of His believing servants: Many of them have been flayed from head to toe with rakes of iron for the sake of their religion, yet not one of them was deterred by this from being obedient to the religion of God. As for you, if you see such suffering as a reason to despair of victory, then you are mistaken, for the truth is that you ought to view this torment and pain as a means of moving forward along the path and as a sign of God's nearness. God will most surely grant triumph to this religion such that you will see the day when a man can ride from San'a' to Hadramawt with nothing to fear but God Himself." (Some accounts of this statement include the words, "and nothing to fear for the safety of his sheep but wolves.")

These words contain the secret behind the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) announced to his Companions that God would grant them victory over the lands of Persia and Byzantium. These lands were not conquered by them until quite some time after the Apostle's (pbuh) death, although one might have expected that, given the Messenger of God's (pbuh) great merit and God's great love for him (pbuh), these lands would be conquered during his lifetime and under his own leadership. This is, indeed, what one would have expected had it not been for the fact that victory is linked to the law which we have just discussed.

During the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh), the Muslims had not yet paid in full for their victories in the lands of Syria and Iraq; however, this was a price which would have to be paid, whether the Messenger of God (pbuh) was present among them or not. What mattered was not that the various conquests be linked to the name of the Messenger of God (pbuh) and that they take place under his command due to God's great love for him; rather, what mattered was for the Muslims who had pledged their allegiance to God and His Messenger (pbuh) to demonstrate their sincerity in the pledge they had made when they witnessed gladly to the truth of God's words, "Indeed, God has purchased from the beleivers their lives and their possessions (in exchange) for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of God, so they kill and

are killed" (Qur'an 9: 111).

The Prophet's
Negotiations Policy

Ibn Hisham relates an account on the authority of Ibn Ishaq that 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah, a man of influence and repute who was known among his people for his understanding and insight, spoke to the assembly of Quraysh, saying, "O men of Quraysh, shall I betake myself to speak to Muhammad? I could make him a number of offers in return for leaving us in peace."

"Yes, Abu al-Walid," they replied, "do speak with him."

With that, 'Utbah approached the Messenger of God (pbuh), sat down with him and said, "O son of my brother, you are one of us, and you are known for your honor in your clan and for your noble descent. You have laid a weighty accusation on your people, one which has broken up their unity and cast aspersions on their hopes and dreams. So, allow me to present you with a number of offers for you to consider."

"Speak on, O Abu al-Walid. I am listening," said the Messenger of God (pbuh).

Abu al-Walid continued, "O son of my brother, if what you seek through this message you have brought is wealth, then we will amass for you enough of our assets to make you the richest man among us. If what you seek is eminence, we will give you a place of such high standing among us that we would not dare decide on any matter without your approval. If what you seek is power, we shall set you up as king over us. If, on the other hand, this which comes upon you is a malady from which you are unable to find healing, then we shall seek medical assistance for you, spending of our own substance until we have cured you of it."

"Is that all you have to say, Abu al-Walid?" asked the Messenger of God (pbuh).

"Yes, that is all," he replied.

"Listen to me, now," said the Prophet (pbuh). He then recited, "In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Ha, Mim. A revelation from the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. A Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic Qur'an for a people who know. Giving glad tidings and warning, but most of them turn away, so they do not hear. And they say, 'Our hearts are within coverings (screened) from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between us and you is a partition, so work; indeed, we are working'. Say, (O Muhammad), 'I am only a man like you to whom it has been revealed that your god is but one God; so take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness.' And woe to those who associate others with God" (Qur'an 41: 1-6).

The Messenger of God continued to recite as 'Utbah listened until he reached the place where God declares, "But if they turn away, say: 'I warn you of (the coming of) a thunderbolt of punishment like the thunderbolt (that fell upon the tribes) of 'Ad and Thamud!'"(Qur'an 41: 13). Finally, frightened by the threat of punishment contained in the verse, 'Utbah clapped his hand over his (pbuh) mouth and begged him to stop.

'Utbah returned to his companions and sat down among them.

"What news do you bring, Abu al-Walid?" they asked.

"The news I bring is that I heard words the likes of which I have never heard before. By God, it was neither poetry, nor sorcery, nor divination. O men of Quraysh, do as I say and leave this man free to do as he wishes. I swear to you, the words that I heard from him are bound to reach far and wide.Then, if he is defeated by the Arabs, others will have spared you the task of putting him to death, whereas if he defeats them, then his rule will be your rule, and his glory, your glory."

They said, "By God, Abu al-Walid, he has bewitched you with his tongue!"

"This is what I think of him," he replied. "As for you, you are free to do as you see fit."

According to al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and others, a group of the polytheists, including al-Walid Ibn al-Mughirah and al- 'As Ibn Wa'il, came and proposed to the Messenger of God (pbuh) that they give him enough money to make him the richest man among them and marry him to their most beautiful virgins, provided that he cease insulting their gods and disparaging their customs. When he (pbuh) refused to do anything but continue calling others to the truth with which he had been sent, they said, "In that case, you can worship our gods one day, and we will worship your god the next."

However, he rejected this proposal as well, after which the following verse descended: "Say: 'O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have (ever) worshipped, and neither will you (ever) worship that which I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion'" (Qur'an 109: 1-6).

Following this, Quraysh's men of note repeated the attempt which had been made by 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah to dissuade the Prophet (pbuh) from his calling. Going to him in a group, they offered him power and wealth as well as medical treatment if the words which had been coming to him were some kind of madness from the jinn.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, saying, "I did not come bearing this message in pursuit of your wealth, honor, or power over you. Rather, God has sent me to you as a messenger. He has revealed to me a holy writ and commanded me to be a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Hence, I have exhorted you and delivered to you messages from my Sustainer. If you accept what I have brought, then this is to your good fortune both in this world and the next; and if you reject it, I will patiently await God's further commands, allowing God to judge between us."

They replied, "If you refuse to accept any of the things we have offered you, then you know that of all people, there is no one who suffers more than we do from a dearth of land and water. So, then, ask your Lord who has sent you with this message to spread out as plains before us these mountains which have hemmed us in for so long, and cause rivers to spring forth like those in Syria and Iraq. Also, have your Lord bring back certain of our forefathers, including Qusayy Ibn Kilab. He was a wise patriarch, and we would ask him to tell us whether what you are saying is true or false. Also, ask your Lord to give you gardens, palaces, and treasures of gold and silver. If you do what we have asked, we will believe you, and we will know that God has sent you as a messenger, as you have said."

"I will not do such a thing, nor am I one to ask such things of my Lord."

Then, after talking and wrangling for quite some time, they said to him, "We have heard that you are being taught these things by a man in al-Yamamah by the name of "al-Rahman". But we will never believe in this "al-Rahman." O Muhammad, we have given you one opportunity after another to change your ways, and no longer would we incur blame were we to slay you. Hence, we will give you no peace until either we slay you, or you slay us."

They then rose and took leave of him.

Lessons and Principles

The scene which we have just examined from the prophetic biography offers us three important lessons, which may be summarized as follows:

The first lesson has to do with the true nature of the mission which was undertaken by the Messenger of God (pbuh), since this scene makes clear the distinction between the Prophet's (pbuh) mission and all of the aims and motives which are generally harbored by the champions of new messages and those who promote revolution and reform. Did the Prophet (pbuh) secretly hope to achieve power through the message he brought, or perhaps wealth and a position of leadership? Or was he simply being driven by pathological delusions?

All of these possibilities are proposed by the professional champions of the intellectual invasion (of the Islamic world) and the enemies of this religion. But what mysteries are concealed in the great life which the Sustainer of all the worlds prepared for His Messenger! God Almighty filled the life of His messenger with situations which serve to discount every suggestion that he (pbuh) was driven by selfish ends and which put an end to all suspicions, leaving the partisans of the intellectual invasion at a loss as to how to proceed in their war of the mind.

It was a manifestation of God's majestic wisdom that after entertaining all these possibilities, the polytheists of Quraysh engaged in a series of negotiations with the Messenger of God (pbuh), even though they were, of all people, the most aware of the nature of his mission and the long-term goal of his message, and even though they were certain that he would never succumb to any of their enticements. However, it was the divine will that matters should proceed in this manner in order that history might belie the claims which would be put forward over the years by those who make it their vocation in life to plant doubts in people's minds concerning the truth of Islam.

After thinking long and hard about the matter, Orientalists such as Kremer and Van Vloten could still see no way to accomplish the task of causing people to lose their faith in Islam other than to close their eyes to the truth and allege that the incentive behind Muhammad's (pbuh) mission was nothing but the desire for supremacy and control, even if it meant coming up against boulders that would be sure to repel them and send them reeling leagues backward.

Long before the advent of such thinkers, God used 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah and others like him to place all such worldly hopes and aspirations within easy reach of the Messenger of God (pbuh). Through such men, all of Quraysh were acknowledging him and his Companions and throwing down their raised swords, as it were, along with all their instruments of torture. This being the case, why did he (pbuh) not relent to them? Why – if this was the end he sought through his message and his mission -- did he not consent to take these prizes which had been placed in his very hands?

Would a man whose quest was for dominion and power listen to someone who had come to offer him these very things and who then engaged in prolonged negotiations fraught with intimidation, pleas, and threats, only to say in the end, "I did not come bearing the message I have brought in pursuit of your wealth, honor, or power over you. Rather, God has sent me to you as a messenger. He has revealed to me a holy writ and commanded me to be a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Hence, I have exhorted you and delivered to you messages from my Sustainer. If you accept what I have brought, then this is to your good fortune both in this world and the next; and if you reject it, I will patiently await God's further commands, allowing God to judge between us"?

Add to this the fact that his (pbuh) manner of life was in complete accord with these words of his; in other words, he did not spurn leadership and control with his tongue, only to pursue them through acts of

stealth. Rather, he (pbuh) ate and drank only the simplest fare, not exceeding that which would be available to the poor and the unfortunate. Al-Bukhari relates that 'A'ishah said, "When the Prophet (pbuh) died, there was nothing to eat on my shelves but half a barley loaf, and it lasted me quite a while." Al-Bukhari also relates that Anas, may God be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet (pbuh) never once ate from a table or tasted fine bread."

He (pbuh) was likewise sparing in his manner of dress and in the manner in which he furnished his house. He preferred to rest on a mat, and he was never known to have slept on anything soft or plush. In fact, his wives, including 'A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, came to him one day complaining of the penury in which they were living and demanding that he increase their allowances for adornments and clothes so that none of them would be less elegant than the wives of his Companions. Lowering his head angrily, he made no reply until the following verse was revealed:

O Prophet, say to your wives, 'If you desire the worldly life and its adornment, then come, I will provide for you and give you a gracious release. But if you desire God and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter; then, indeed, God has prepared for the doers of good among you a great reward" (Qur'an 33: 28, 29).

Reciting these two verses to them, the Messenger of God (pbuh) gave them a choice between consenting to live with him in the condition he was in, or insisting on their demands, in which case he would provide them with a generous dowry and allow them to take their leave of him; all of them, however, chose to go on living with him under his existing circumstances.[51]

After considering facts such as these, how could any reasonably minded person doubt the validity of his prophethood or imagine that he was driven by the desire for power and wealth? This, then, is the first lesson to be derived from this scene.

The second lesson has to do with the meaning of the wisdom to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) clung and which was an aspect of his very character. One may ask: Are those engaged in the propagation of Islam free to set whatever policy they see fit with respect to the manner in which they engage in this task? Have they been given authority by the lawgiver (pbuh) to employ any means they see fit so long as their aim is to serve the truth? The answer is: No. The law of Islam has provided us not only with ends, but with means as well. Hence, in seeking to achieve those ends which God has set down for us, we are to adopt only those particular means which He has approved. Legitimate political wisdom has its place, but only within the limits set by these rightful means.

Evidence for this is to be found in the account narrated above. Considerations of political prudence might have been expected to lead the Prophet (pbuh) to accept his opponents' offer of leadership or dominion, then employ such power or leadership as a means to fulfill the mission of Islam later on, especially in view of the fact that authority and domination hold powerful sway over people's souls. As evidence of this, one has only to note all the proponents of messages and doctrines who have made use of the opportunity to seize power in order to use the resulting authority as a means of imposing their teachings on others.

However, the Prophet (pbuh) was not willing to adopt such a means to fulfill his mission, since this would have violated the principles of the mission itself. After all, if it were permissible for such an approach to be considered a kind of well-guided policy, gone would be the distinction between the honest, straightforward individual and the dishonest, deceitful one. If this were the case, the sincere bearer of a message of truth would be lumped together with the charlatans and swindlers under the byword of "prudence and politics."

The philosophy of this religion rests on the foundations of integrity and honesty in both the means and the end; hence, just as the end can only be one of honor and probity, so must the means be characterized by these same virtues. Given this fact, those engaged in the spread of the Islamic message need to engage in sacrifice and struggle in most of the circumstances in which they find themselves, because the nature of the

path which they tread will not allow them to deviate far to the right or to the left.

It is thus a mistake to suppose that the principle of wisdom or prudence in carrying out the Islamic mission means simply the adoption of whatever means will facilitate the work of those spreading Islam or help them avoid adversity and suffering. Rather, the wisdom employed in such work dictates that one employ those means which are most likely to conform to people's degree of understanding and ways of thinking.What this means is that if people's obduracy and opposition are hindering the progress of the Islamic message, then wisdom dictates that one prepare himself for struggle and for the sacrifice of both life and property. Wisdom, then, means simply to put everything in its proper place; this is the difference between wisdom and trickery, and between prudence and keeping the peace as a means of avoiding suffering.

You may be aware that when the Prophet (pbuh) saw signs that some of the leaders of Quraysh were open to understanding Islam, he began enthusiastically speaking with them and explaining to them whatever they wished to ask him about. In fact, he got so carried away with the thrill of being able to guide them in this manner that he slighted the blind Companion 'Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum when he stopped to listen and began asking questions himself. The behavior of the Prophet (pbuh) in this instance was a result of his enthusiasm not to miss an opportunity to win over the leaders of Quraysh, together with the hope that he could respond to 'Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktum at a later time.

However, God reproached him (pbuh) for this, saying of him, "He frowned and turned away because the blind man approached him!" (Qur'an 80: 1-2). In this manner, God took him (pbuh) to task for the way in which he responded to the situation even though his purpose had been legitimate and even noble. This was because the means which he (pbuh) had employed – that of ignoring someone in order to win the hearts of the polytheists -- had served to discourage a Muslim, and this is something which is neither legitimate nor acceptable.

In short, when providing others with guidance and calling others to Islam, no one has the right to alter any aspect of the precepts or principles of Islam or to transgress or disparage its limits in the name of "prudence", since wisdom is not truly wisdom unless it is circumscribed and regulated by the limits of Islamic law, principles, and morals.

As for the third lesson, we derive it from the position taken by the Apostle (pbuh) toward the demands made by Quraysh as a condition for their following him. This was a position in which he (pbuh) was supported by God, as is mentioned by most commentators on the following verses: "And they say, 'We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring! Or (until) you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force (and abundance)! Or you make the heavens fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring God and the angels before (us)! Or you have a house of ornament (i.e., gold) or you ascend into the sky. And (even then), we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read.' Say, 'Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?'" (Qur'an 17: 90-93).

Contrary to the belief of some, the reason that God did not respond to this demand is not that the Apostle (pbuh) was given no miracles but that of the Qur'an. Rather, the reason is that Almighty God knew that they were merely demanding such things out of disbelief and obstinacy and as a way of ridiculing the Prophet (pbuh); this is clear from both the manner in which the demands were made and the content of the demands themselves. For if the Omniscient God had known that their request was sincere, that their intentions were pure, and that they were attempting in this way to ascertain the truthfulness of the Prophet (pbuh), He would surely have fulfilled it. However, the attitude of the Qurayshites in this matter is reflected in God's words in another verse, where He says, "And even if we opened for them a gate from the Heaven and they continued therein to ascend, they would say, 'Our eyes have only been dazzled. Rather, we are a people affected by magic" (Qur'an 15: 14-15). Once you aware of this, you will realize that there

is no incongruity between this occurrence and the well-established fact that God honored His prophet (pbuh) with a variety of miracles, the details of which we shall discuss below, God willing.

The Economic Blockade

Based on chains of authority going back variously to Musá Ibn ʻUqbah, Ibn Ishaq, and others, those of Quraysh who were bent on denying the truth agreed to kill the Messenger of God (pbuh), and spoke concerning the matter with the clans of Hashim and al-Muttalib. However, they refused to hand him (pbuh) over to them.

Consequently, they decided instead to ostracize him (pbuh), the Muslims with him, and those members of Hashim and al-Muttalib who were giving them protection. They drew up a document according to which they would not allow their sons or daughters to marry members of either of these two clans, pledge any sort of allegiance to them, allow any means of sustenance to reach them, accept any compromise from them, or have mercy on them in any way until the clan of al-Muttalib had delivered the Messenger of God (pbuh) into their hands to be slain. They then hung this document inside the Kaʻbah.

Beginning in the month of al-Muharram of the seventh year after the Prophet's (pbuh) calling, those of Quraysh bent on denying the truth maintained their commitment to this document for three years, although according to some accounts, this period was only two years. The account originating with Musá Ibn ʻUqbah has it that this took place before the Apostle (pbuh) instructed his Companions to emigrate to Abyssinia, and that he issued them this instruction after the blockade had begun. As for Ibn Ishaq's account, it indicates that the document was drawn up after the Companions had emigrated to Abyssinia, and prior to ʻUmar's entry into Islam.

The clans of Hashim and al-Muttalib were under siege along with the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the Muslims among them. The inhabitants of Mecca were comprised of a number of different clans, and both the Muslims and the unbelievers of these clans suffered from the blockade's effects. As for the Muslims, they submitted themselves to the ordeal as a response to their faith in God, while the unbelievers did so out of a zeal to protect their own. The only exception to this rule was the family of Abu Lahab, whose real name was ʻAbd al-ʻUzzá Ibn ʻAbd al-Muhhalib, who sided with Quraysh against the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions.

The Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions suffered great tribulation during these three years. According to the most well-attested accounts, their resources were depleted to the point where they were eating camel fodder and the leaves off of shrubs. Al-Suhayli mentions that when a caravan would come to Mecca, one of the Prophet's Companions would come to the market to buy some food to feed his family, and Abu Lahab would say, "O merchants, raise your prices for Muhammad's Companions lest they be able to buy anything from you." So they would double and triple their prices, forcing him to return empty-handed to his famished little ones.

As this blockade was entering its third year, some members of the Qusayy clan began blaming themselves for their part in it, and agreed to go back on their commitment to it. As this was taking place, God sent woodworms against the document which contained their agreement, causing them to destroy most of it. The only thing which remained intact was the words in which the name of God was mentioned.

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) informed his uncle Abu Talib of this, the latter replied, "Did your Lord inform you of this?"

"Yes," he (pbuh) replied.

So, going to Quraysh together with a group of others of his clan, Abu Talib asked them to bring him the document, leading them to believe that he (pbuh) had agreed to their conditions. So they brought it to him.

With the document still folded up, Abu Talib said, "My nephew, who has never told me an untruth, has informed me that the Supreme God has sent woodworms against the document which you drew up, causing them to destroy all the outrages and perfidy it contains. If what he says is true, then I call upon you to come to your senses and repent of the bad opinion which you have had of him, for we will never hand him over to you even if it means that we die to the last man among us. If it is false, however, we will turn him over to you for you to do with him as you please."

"It is agreed," they replied.

They then opened up the document, only to find that what the guileless, trustworthy one (pbuh) had reported was, indeed, true.

"Your nephew has cast a spell on it!" they cried, whereupon they grew even more hostile toward him (pbuh) and determined to do him harm.

At this point, five chiefs from among the Qurayshite unbelievers – Hisham Ibn 'Amr Ibn al-Harith, Zuhayr Ibn Umayyah, al-Muh'im Ibn 'Adi, Abu al-Bukhturi Ibn Hisham, and Zam'ah Ibn al-Aswad -- decided to nullify the agreement contained in the document and end the blockade. The first of them to openly call for such a nullification was Zuhayr Ibn Umayyah; approaching people at the Ka'bah, he said, "O people of Mecca, shall we continue to partake of food and clothe ourselves while the clans of Hashim and al-Muttalib perish, unable either to buy or sell? By God, I shall not rest until this unjust agreement is declared null and void!"

The rest of the five men then made similar statements, after which al-Muh'im Ibn 'Adi got up and tore the document in pieces. The five chiefs then went out with a group of others to the people of Hashim and al-Muhhalib and the Muslims who were with them, instructing them to depart for their homes.

Lessons and Principles

This episode represents the height of the adversity which was suffered by the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions over a period of three years. As we have seen, the polytheists of the clans of Hashim and al-Muhhalib, unwilling to abandon the Messenger of God (pbuh), shared in the same sufferings endured by the Muslims. However, our concern here is not to discuss these people or the reason for the position which they took, since what moved them to do so had nothing to do with doctrine or religion; rather, they were spurred to take this position by their zeal to protect their own kith and kin and their refusal to subject themselves to the humiliation which they would have suffered had they allowed the Qurayshite polytheists not belonging to Hashim or al-Muhhalib to put Muhammad (pbuh) to death. What they did, then, was to reconcile two desires on their part: (1) to persist in their idolatry and their proud refusal to submit to the truth which had been brought to them by Muhammad (pbuh), and (2) to protect their kith and kin, regardless of whether they had done right or wrong, from maltreatment or attack by outsiders.

As for the Muslims among them, led by the Messenger of God (pbuh), what gave them the patience to endure such tribulation was their obedience to God and their willingness to endure humiliation in this world for the sake of God's blessing in the next. And it is this point which we wish to explore here.

You might hear some of the professional proponents of the intellectual invasion of the Muslim world saying: "It was the fanatic zeal of the clans of Hashim and al-Muttalib that lay behind the mission of

Muhammad (pbuh), and which preserved and protected it! Evidence for this is the negative position which they took toward the polytheists of Quraysh when they disenfranchised the Muslims." However, this argument is based on a clear fallacy. First of all, it was only natural that the tribal fanaticism that still survived from pre-Islamic times would lead the people of Hashim and al-Muhhalib to defend the life of a cousin of theirs when he was threatened by outsiders. Moreover, when this pre-Islamic tribal solidarity led relatives to act with such zeal, it took no account of principles or questions of truth and falsehood. Rather, it was simply a matter of clan solidarity, nothing more and nothing less. It is this fact which made it possible for Muhammad's relatives to conduct themselves in such a seemingly contradictory manner, moved as they were, on one hand, by contemptuous refusal to submit themselves to his message and, on the other, by their desire to support him against all of the other polytheists of Quraysh.

This being the case, we must still ask: What benefit did they bring to the Prophet (pbuh) by their protection of him? They were persecuted along with him (pbuh) and his Companions, while Quraysh went right on ostracizing the Muslims with unconstrained viciousness and ferocity without the clans of Hashim and al-Muhhalib being able to do anything to dampen their hateful ardor. The important thing for us to know, then, is that the protection which the Messenger of God (pbuh) received from his relatives was not protection of the message with which he had been sent; rather, it was simply protection of his person from outsiders. If, then, it was possible for the Muslims to make good use of such protection as a means of moving their struggle forward and overcoming those bent on denying the truth, there was no reason for them to refrain from doing so.

As for the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his believing Companions, what was it that gave them the strength to endure this suffocating oppression? What end were they hoping to achieve by remaining steadfast despite such an ordeal?

What answer would be given to this question by those who interpret the message of Muhammad (pbuh) and his Companions' faith in it as a leftist revolution against an oppressive right, that is, a revolution of the persecuted poor against the wealthy elite? Picture in your mind the series of events which we have just set forth, including the episodes of persecution and torture endured by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the Muslims; then, in light of this, explain how the message of Islam could have been a hunger-inspired economic revolution spurred on by resentment toward the merchants of Mecca and the proprietors of its economic institutions.

The polytheists offered Muhammad (pbuh) dominion, leadership, and wealth provided that he cease calling others to embrace Islam. So why did he (pbuh) not agree to this? And why did his Companions not rebel against him and pressure him to accept Quraysh's offer if their ultimate aim was merely to satisfy their physical hunger? Would the champions of a leftist revolution aspire to anything more than to have the reins of power in their hands and money in their pockets?

Muhammad (pbuh) and his Muslim companions had been cut off by their own people from all means of economic and social survival: No commodities were allowed to come into their hands and no food was allowed to reach their homes until they were at the point of eating the leaves off trees. Even so, they patiently endured, remaining loyal to their Apostle (pbuh). Is this the conduct of those who aspire to engage in a revolution that aims to ensure them their daily bread?

When the Prophet (pbuh) emigrated to Medina, and when his Companions emigrated there both before and after him, they left behind wealth, land, and various possessions. Stripped bare of everything that might be sought by those greedy for wealth, they desired no substitute for their faith in God and set no store by a world that had passed them by or a worldly kingdom which had turned its back on them. Does this, then, serve as evidence that Islam was a leftist revolution initiated for the sake of a bite to eat?

As for those who make such claims, they find support in the two following observations: (1) That the first group of Muhammad's (pbuh) Companions in Mecca were, for the most part, slaves, poor, and persecuted, which indicates that by following Muhammad (pbuh), they were giving vent to their unhappiness, and they were hoping for a better economic future for themselves under this new religion; and (2) That it was not long before these same Companions found the horizons of the entire world opening up to them, and wealth and riches coming into their possession, a fact which suggests that the Apostle's aim had been to achieve this very end. However, if you reflect for a moment on the manner in which they have arrived at their conclusions based on these two observations, you will realize how fallacious their thinking is.

As for the observation that the Prophet's first Companions came from among the poor and enslaved, this is true. However, there is no correlation between this fact and the claim that they, therefore, entered Islam simply in order to improve their material conditions. There is a law, as it were, which requires that the scales of justice be set up among people and that the arrogant, the wrongdoers and the tyrants have their hands slapped, as it were. It goes without saying, then, that such a law of justice will be spurned and even violently resisted by those who have come to derive pleasure from the life of oppression and crime, since such a law promises them more loss than gain. Similarly, it is only natural that this law will be welcomed by all who have been oppressed and weak and, in fact, by everyone who has nothing to gain from the business of exploitation and oppression, because it promises to give them more than it takes from them or, at the very least, because they have no problems with others which would cause them to resent the responsibilities and costs which it involves.

Most of those who gathered around the Apostle (pbuh) were convinced that he had brought the truth and that he was a prophet sent by God. Those, by contrast, who were in positions of leadership and who were addicted to prestige and control were held back by their own natures and by their circumstances from surrendering to this truth and the requirements which it entailed. As for others, however, they found nothing which would prevent them from submitting to something in which they had come to believe. What, then, is the connection between this observation – the correctness of which is plain to see – and the allegations which such people put forward?

As for the claim that the mission being carried out by the Messenger of God (pbuh) was intended to bring the Muslims into possession of wealth and enable them to seize the thrones of kings – based on the fact that the Muslims actually did do this – it is no less untenable than the first. Given that the Muslims did, in fact, manage to conquer the lands of the Byzantines and the Persians not long after having declared their trust in God through Islam, is this evidence that they only entered Islam out of a greedy desire to take over the thrones of Byzantium and Persia? If the motive for their becoming Muslims had been to fulfill some worldly lust, not even the smallest part of the miracle of this conquest would have taken place.

If 'Umar (Ibn al-Khahhab), while preparing his army for the Battle of al-Qadisiyah and bidding farewell to his commander, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, had been harboring the ambition to win the treasures of Khasrau, and if his mouth had been watering at the thought of living in the lap of luxury and sitting on a throne such as his, then Sa'd would have returned with nothing but burdensome weights of disappointment and humiliation. However, the Muslim soldiers bore witness to their faith in God through their struggle to win victory for their religion and, in response, God bore witness to their sincerity and honored them by granting them the reins of power and enriching them in a way they had never dreamed of.

If the dream cherished by the Muslims at the Battle of al-Qadisiyah had been to gain wealth, enjoy lives of opulence, and luxuriate in the pleasures of the world, then Rib'i Ibn 'Amir, may God be pleased with him, would not have entered Rustum's pavilion and expressed his contempt for the shows of extravagance which filled the place, with Rustum holding himself upright by pressing his spear into the plush carpets until he had ruined them. Nor would he have said to Rustum, "If you and your people enter Islam, we will leave you, your wealth, and your land in peace"! Are these the words of someone who has come to seize power,

land, and money?

God honored the Muslims with the resources of the entire world precisely because they had not been seeking them; rather, their sole thought had been to win God's pleasure. If, through this struggle of theirs, they had been aiming to gain worldly power and riches, they would never have been able to do so.

The issue here is simply the fulfillment of the divine law expressed in God's words, "But We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors" (Qur'an 28: 5). The understanding of this law poses no difficulty whatsoever, provided that one's mind is free of enslavement to any particular desire or aim.

The Muslims' First Emigration and its Significance

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) saw the tribulation being endured by his Companions and realized that he was incapable of protecting them, he said to them, "You could go to the land of Abyssinia, a land of virtue where there is a king under whose reign no one is treated unjustly." Consequently, the Muslims fled for protection to the land of Abyssinia for fear of being tempted further to abandon their religion. The foremost of the emigrants were 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan and his wife, Ruqayyah the daughter of the Messenger of God (pbuh), Abu Hudhayfah and his wife, al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr, and 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn 'Awf; in all, those who gathered in Abyssinia numbered about eighty men.[52]

When the Qurayshites saw what had happened, they sent 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Rabi'ah and 'Amr Ibn al- 'As (who had not yet entered Islam) to the Emperor of Abyssinia with a large variety of gifts for him, his retinue, and his bishops, in the hope that he would refuse to grant asylum to the Muslims and, instead, turn them over to their enemies. However, when they spoke with the Emperor about the matter, having already spoken with his bishops and given them the gifts they had brought, the Emperor refused to hand over any of the Muslims until he had spoken to them about this new religion of theirs. Hence, they were brought before him along with the two messengers from Quraysh, and he said to them, "What is this religion which has caused you to part ways with your people, and to enter neither my religion nor any other?"

The person to whom the Emperor addressed the question was Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib, who replied, "O King, we were once a people living in ignorance: worshipping idols, eating the flesh of animals that had died without being slaughtered, committing acts of abomination, neglecting our kith and kin, treating our neighbors badly, and allowing the strong among us to oppress the weak. Thus we lived until God sent us a messenger from among ourselves, a man whose family origin, honesty, integrity, and chastity were well known to us. He called upon us to worship God alone and to do away with the stones and idols which we worshipped as our forefathers had done. He instructed us to be truthful in our words, to fulfill our promises, and to respect our obligations to our blood relations, and he forbid us to commit abominations. So we believed him and placed our trust in him, obeying the message which he had brought from God. As a consequence, however, our people denounced us, tortured us, and did everything in their power to make us turn away from our religion and revert to the worship of idols. When they continued to oppress us, wrong us, and persecute us, we came to your land, choosing you above all others as the one from whom we could hope to receive protection and be treated with impartiality."

The Emperor then asked him to recite some of what the Messenger of God (pbuh) had brought them, so Ja'far recited to him a portion of the chapter of the Qur'an entitled "Mary." When he heard Ja'far's recitation, the Emperor wept until his beard was moist with tears. Then he said to them, "This message and that which was brought by Jesus are from a single source." Then, turning to the two messengers sent from Quraysh, he said, "Take your leave, for by God, I shall never deliver them up to you, and I will not allow snares to be laid for them."

The messengers then told him, "O King, these people say offensive things about Jesus. Why do you not send for them and ask them what they say?" So he sent for them and asked them about the matter.

Replying to the emperor's query, Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib spoke again, saying, "We say of him that which we were taught by our prophet, Muhammad, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his descendents, whose message tells us that Jesus was God's servant, His spirit, and the fulfillment of His promise which He had conveyed unto Mary, the blessed virgin."

Reaching down to the ground and picking up a stick, the emperor said, "By God, the difference between Jesus son of Mary and the truth you have expressed is no greater than the measure of this stick!"

He then returned the messengers' gifts to them, more determined than ever not to abandon the Muslims, and they went back to Quraysh with their mission unfulfilled. Some time later, the Muslims in Abyssinia received word that the people of Mecca had embraced Islam, so they set off in return. However, before they arrived, they received word that the report about the people of Mecca accepting Islam was false. As a consequence, none of them would be able to enter unless he did so stealthily, or under a pact of protection from someone in Mecca. There were thirty-three men in the party which returned, including 'Uthman Ibn Maé'un, who went back under the protection of al-Walid Ibn al-Mughirah, and Abu Salamah, who returned under the protection of Abu Talib.

Lessons and Principles

The hadiths concerning the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia offer us three lessons. The first of these lessons is that religion, adherence to it, and the firm establishment of its foundations are the source of all strength. These, together, make up the wall which is capable of protecting all that one possesses a right to, be it wealth, land, liberty, or dignity. Consequently, it is the duty of all proponents of Islam and those who struggle for its sake to marshall all their resources to preserve their religion and its principles, and to allow their country, their land, their wealth, and their lives to be means of preserving and establishing the religion's teachings such that, if necessity requires it, these may all be spent for the religion's sake.

The reason for this is that if the religion is lost or defeated, neither one's country, money, nor land will stand in its stead. Rather, one will soon find that these things, too, have been lost. If, on the other hand, the religion is strengthened, with its foundations firmly established in the society and its doctrine in people's hearts, then everything which has been lost by way of money, land, and country will be restored. Not only so, but they will be restored in even greater abundance, since they will be hedged about by a wall of dignity, strength, and wisdom.

One of the divine laws at work throughout history is that spiritual forces act to preserve material gains and forces. The richer a nation is in terms of sound morals, doctrine, and social standards of conduct, the more cohesive, enduring, and invincible its material power will be. Conversely, the weaker a nation's morals, the more confused its doctrine, and the more misguided or even aberrant its laws and standards, the more transient its material attainments and power will be. Of course, you might chance to find a nation which is misguided in its doctrine and decadent in its moral and social values but which, nevertheless, is standing on its feet in terms of material power and authority; the reality, however, is that such a nation is moving quickly toward a deep abyss. The reason for this is that this movement, swift as it is, is imperceptible to us due to the shortness of the human life span in relation to the long expanse of history. Such movement can only be seen by the ever vigilant eye of history, not the eye of distracted, unobservant human beings. Or you might encounter a people who have been stripped of all their material resources, including wealth and a land to call home, due to their commitment to preserving sound doctrine and building a healthy social system. However, before long you will find that the defenders of this sound doctrine and the healthy social system and morals to which it gives rise have regained their despoiled homeland and their extorted wealth, and that their power has been restored many times over.

You will find the most accurate vision of the universe, human beings, and life only in the doctrine of Islam, which is the religion which God has established for His servants on earth; moreover, you will only find a truly sound, just social system within the system provided for by Islam and its divinely inspired guidance. One of the foundations of the call to Islam is the willingness to sacrifice wealth, homeland, and even one's life for its sake, since in this manner, the Muslims can guarantee themselves these very blessings.

Hence, the principle of emigration has been given legitimacy in Islam because the Apostle (pbuh), when he saw the harm that had come to his Companions at the hands of the polytheists to the point where he feared that they would be tempted to abandon their faith, instructed them to leave their homeland and emigrate. My readers need to be aware that this emigration was, itself, a kind of suffering for the sake of their religion, since they were not actually escaping hardship, but simply exchanging one type of ordeal for another until relief became possible and victory was achieved.

Another thing one needs to realize in this connection is that Mecca at that time was not a place where Islam was welcomed and practiced such that one could ask: Why did the Companions leave "the abode of peace" in hopes of preserving their well-being in a land of unbelievers? During this period of time, Mecca, Abyssinia, and other places as well were basically alike in this regard, so the question was simply: In which of these locations would the Companions find an environment most conducive to the practice and propagation of their religion?

The question of emigration out of an Islamic country is judged differently dependent on specific circumstances. If, for example, a Muslim is unable in a certain country to practice his or her religious rites, such as ritual prayer, fasting, the call to prayer, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, then it is incumbent upon him or her to emigrate elsewhere. If, on the other hand, a Muslim finds himself being harmed by conditions which he faces in an Islamic country, then it may be judged permissible for him to emigrate to another Islamic country. However, if such emigration would require him to neglect any Islamic duty which no one else could fulfill on his behalf, then it is forbidden.[53]

The second lesson to be gained from these events has to do with the nature of the link between the messages brought by Muhammad (pbuh), and Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon them both. The Emperor of Abyssinia was a follower of the religion of Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon him, and he was a faithful, sincere Christian. Moreover, this sincerity of his required that he not embrace anything which would conflict with his Christian faith or give assistance to people whose doctrines conflicted with the message of the Gospel brought by Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon him.

In other words, if the claims made by those who claim to follow Jesus son of Mary and the teachings of the Gospel to the effect that Jesus is the Son of God Almighty and that he is One of a divine Trinity were true, then the Emperor of Abyssinia – who was one of the most sincere Christians there has ever been – would have maintained the same, and he would have refuted what the Muslims were saying and sided with the messengers sent by Quraysh. Instead, however, we find him commenting on the passage which he has heard from the Qur'an and its interpretation of the life of Jesus with the words, "This message and that which was brought by Jesus son of Mary are from a single sacred source!" Moreover, he said this in the hearing of his bishops and the biblical scholars who surrounded him.

This is further confirmation of what is already intuitively clear, namely, that all of the prophets have come bearing a single, unchanging doctrine, and that the disagreements among the Jews and Christians only took place "out of mutual jealousy," as God Almighty says.

As for the third lesson, it is permissible for Muslims to accept protection from non-Muslims if necessary, whether those providing the protection are "People of the Book," such as the Emperor of Abyssinia – who was a Christian at the time, though he later entered Islam[54] -- or polytheists, such as those under whose protection the Muslims returned to Mecca from Abyssinia, Abu Talib, the uncle of the Messenger of God

(pbuh), and al-Muh'im Ibn 'Adi, under whose protection the Messenger of God (pbuh) returned to Mecca from al-Ta'if.

This provision, of course, does not apply if such protection entails harm to the Islamic mission or requires changing the precepts of the religion or remaining silent about the commission of certain forbidden acts. This may be seen from the position taken by the Messenger of God (pbuh) when Abu Talib asked him not to speak out against the polytheists' gods, thereby sparing his own life and not subjecting Abu Talib to more than he could bear; he (pbuh) refused to remain silent about anything which he knew he must declare openly. Hence, it was at this time that he (pbuh) resigned himself to the possibility that he would have to forego his uncle's protection.

The First Delegation
Sent to the Messenger of God (pbuh)

In the midst of the suffering and persecution which was being endured by the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions, a delegation came from outside Mecca to meet with the Messenger of God (pbuh) and gain some understanding of Islam. The delegation was made up of about thirty Christian men from Abyssinia who had come with Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib upon his return to Mecca. When they sat with the Messenger of God (pbuh), they became familiar with his character and the conditions in which he lived and heard the Qur'an recited to them, all of them believed.

When Abu Jahl learned of it, he approached them, saying, "Never have I seen a more foolish bunch of riders! Your people sent you to find out more about this man, and no sooner had you sat with him for a while than you abandoned your religion and believed the things he said!"

"Peace be upon you," they replied. "We have no intention of insulting or discrediting you. It is simply that we have chosen this path, and you have chosen another. Nor have we done any injustice to ourselves." It was in regard to these men that the following verse was revealed:

"As for those unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime – they (are bound to) believe in this one (as well); and whenever it is (clearly) conveyed unto them, they (are bound to) profess, 'We have come to believe in it, for, behold, it is the truth from our Sustainer – and verily, even before this have we surrendered ourselves unto Him!' These it is that shall receive a twofold reward for having been patient in adversity, and having repelled evil with good, and having spent on others out of what We provided for them as sustenance, and, whenever they heard frivolous talk, having turned away from it and said: 'Unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto you, your deeds. Peace be upon you – (but) we do not seek out such as are ignorant (of the meaning of right and wrong)'" (Qur'an 28: 52-55).[55]

Lessons and Principles

There are two aspects of this account which merit our attention. The first is that this delegation came to Mecca to meet with the Messenger of God (pbuh) and learn about Islam in the very midst of the persecution and tribulations through which the Muslims were passing. This fact is startling evidence that the misfortunes and pain which may be the lot of those promoting Islam does at all mean that they have failed; hence, such sufferings should be no cause for weakening, faintness, or despair. On the contrary, as we have noted above, suffering is the path which must be trod on the way to success and victory.

This delegation, which was comprised of more than thirty and, according to some accounts, more than forty men from among the Christians of Abyssinia, traversed a sea of difficulties, as it were, to reach the Messenger of God (pbuh) and declare their loyalty to the new message. In so doing they were saying, in effect, that the enemies of the Islamic message, no matter how they might seek to confine it and no matter how severely they might torment and persecute its followers, ostracizing them and plotting evil against them, would never be able to prevent it from bearing its intended fruit and spreading all over the world.

It was as if Abu Jahl was aware of this fact, and as if this awareness expressed itself in the hateful words with which he confronted the members of this delegation. But what could he do to change it? All that he or others of his ilk could do would be to subject the Muslims to even more torture and persecution; as for preventing Islam from reaching its apex or yielding its destined fruit, however, this was beyond their power.

The second aspect of this account which calls for our attention has to do with the quality of the faith of those in the delegation. Was it the faith of those who have emerged into the light from the darkness of unbelief? The fact is that their faith was nothing more than a continuation of their previous belief; they were acting consistently with the doctrine and the religion to which they had clung all along. As we are told by the narrators of the prophetic biography, they were the possessors of a gospel in which they believed and whose guidance formed the basis for their actions. And since this Gospel commanded them to follow the messenger who was to come after Jesus, may peace be upon him, and about whom it speaks, the continuation of their faith required that they believe in this prophet, namely, Muhammad (pbuh).

Hence, their belief in him (pbuh) did not involve a process of converting from one religion to another as if they preferred one over the other; rather, it was an extension of the reality of their faith in Jesus, may peace be upon him, and that which was revealed to him. This is the meaning of what is said about them in the verse, "And when it is recited to them, they say, 'We have believed in it; indeed, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed we were, (even) before it, Muslims (i.e., submitting to God)'" (The Narration 28: 53). In other words, even before Muhammad's (pbuh) coming, we were Muslims in the deepest sense, and believers in this to which he is calling us, since it is included in that which the Gospel calls us to believe in.

This is the case with everyone who adheres sincerely to that which was brought by Jesus, may blessings and peace be upon him, or by Moses, may blessings and peace be upon him, since faith in the Gospel and the Torah requires faith in the Qur'an and in Muhammad (pbuh). For this reason God commanded His Messenger, when calling Christians and Jews to Islam, simply to require that they apply what is found in the Torah or the Gospel which they claim to believe in. God says, "Say, "O People of the Scripture, you are (standing) on nothing until you uphold (the law of) the Torah and the Gospel'" (Qur'an 5: 68).

This calls for the confirmation of what we have explained above, namely, that the true religion remained a single entity from the creation of Adam, may peace be upon him, until the coming of our prophet, Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his descendents, and that the phrase, "the heavenly, that is, divinely revealed, monotheistic religions" which is used by some people is meaningless. There are, of course, several divinely revealed laws, each of which supercedes that which came before it. Nevertheless, we must not confuse "religion", a word used primarily to refer to doctrine, and "law", which refers to those precepts which govern our behavior with regard to worship and the treatment of others.

The Year of Sorrow

The tenth year following the Prophet's calling witnessed the deaths of both his wife Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, may God be pleased with her, and his uncle, Abu Talib. Ibn Sa'd tells us in his al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá that Abu Talib died one month and five days after Khadijah. Ibn Hisham tells us that Khadijah, may God be pleased with her, was a source of inestimable support to Islam. When the Apostle (pbuh) told her his troubles, she provided him with solace and intimate companionship. As for Abu Talib, he was a source of help and refuge, supporting the Prophet (pbuh) in the face of his people's enmity.

Ibn Hisham says, "When Abu Talib died, the Qurayshites were able to harass the Messenger of God (pbuh) in a way they never would have dreamed of during his lifetime. Some shameless Qurayshite came along one day and threw dirt on his head. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) went home with the dirt still on his head, one of his daughters began cleaning it off, crying as she did so. But he (pbuh) to her, 'Weep not, daughter, God has your father under His protection.'"

So severe were the trials which he (pbuh) suffered during this year for the sake of his message, the Prophet (pbuh) referred to it as "the year of sorrow."

Lessons and Principles

One might ask: What wisdom could there be – given that Abu Talib protected the Prophet (pbuh) as much as he could from hardship and misfortune -- in God's snatching Abu Talib's life away from him before the Muslims had gained strength in Mecca and developed some degree of stamina? Similarly, one might wonder about the divine purpose behind God's taking his (pbuh) wife Khadijah, may God be pleased with her, the person in whom he found such comfort and solace, and with whose help he was able to overcome so much distress and pain.

An important phenomenon emerges here in connection with the basis for Islamic doctrine. If Abu Talib had remained at his nephew's side, supporting and protecting him until the Islamic state had been established in Medina and until the Apostle (pbuh) had freed himself from the oppressive grip of the polytheists, this may have given us reason to imagine that, despite the fact that he did not publicly embrace Islam, Abu Talib was the one giving impetus to the Islamic mission and protecting it by means of his own authority and prestige. If this were the case, there are those who would wax eloquent about the good fortune which attended the Apostle (pbuh) as he undertook his mission thanks to his uncle's protection, while the other Muslims around him were being tortured and persecuted without the benefit of such a refuge.

Hence, the divine wisdom ordained that the Apostle (pbuh) should lose his uncle, Abu Talib, his wife, Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, and everyone who appeared to be providing him with succor and protection. Through these events, two significant facts were revealed. The first of these is that protection, care, and victory come, ultimately, from God Almighty alone. God had promised to preserve His messenger from the

polytheists and all his enemies whether there happened to be other people protecting him or not, and to bring his message to the fulfillment of its destined triumph and success.

The second fact is that the meaning of protection from people in this case was not that the Prophet (pbuh) would not be harmed, tormented, or persecuted. Rather, the protection which God had promised in the words, "And God will protect you from mankind" (Qur'an 5: 67) was protection from being killed, and from any resistance or aggression which might have stopped the Islamic message. Almighty God in His wisdom has ordained that His prophets and messengers should suffer no small measure of persecution and pain; this, however, does not negate the protection which He has promised to provide for them.

Thus, after declaring to the Prophet (pbuh), "Hence, proclaim openly that which you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists. Indeed, We are sufficient for you against the mockers" (Qur'an 15: 94-95), God continues, saying, "And We already know that your breast is constrained by what they say. So exalt (God) with praise of your Lord and be of those who prostrate. And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (i.e., death)" (The Rocky Tract 15: 97-99). One of the reasons behind God's decree that His messenger must pass through such ordeals is that in this manner, He has made it possible for ordinary Muslims throughout the ages to endure with confidence whatever sufferings are entailed by the responsibility of carrying forward the Islamic message. If the Prophet (pbuh) had succeeded in carrying out his mission without any effort or adversity, then his Companions and the Muslims who came after him would have aspired to take their ease as he had, and they would have been reluctant to accept the misfortunes and ordeals which they might encounter along the way.

Things being as they are, however, the impact of the ordeals and sufferings encountered by Muslims is mitigated by the awareness that they are going through the same tribulations which were suffered by the Messenger of God (pbuh), and that they are treading the same path of persecution which he himself (pbuh) trod before them. Hence, regardless of the painful ridicule and insults to which they may be subjected by others, such things will have no power to discourage them, since they will have seen the Messenger of God (pbuh) – God's beloved and the quintessential human being -- having dirt tossed on his head in the marketplace and being forced to go home in this state. When we examine the Prophet's emigration to al-Ta'if and the trials he endured there, we will find an even greater impetus for Muslims to deem easy any trial or anguish which they chance to encounter, in the hope that they can share with their Messenger (pbuh) some portion of what he endured for the sake of the Islamic message.

Another point connected with this chapter in the biography of the Prophet (pbuh) is that some people believe that what led him to name this year, "the year of sorrow" was simply his loss of his uncle, Abu Talib, and his wife, Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid. In keeping with this belief, such people prefer to observe long periods of mourning for their dead. However, this is a misunderstanding of what actually occurred.

The Prophet (pbuh) did not grieve over the loss of his uncle and his wife to the extent that such people suppose, nor did he refer to the year in which they died as "the year of sorrow" simply because he had lost certain dear ones and was saddened by the resulting separation. Rather, the reason for this is that following their deaths, he (pbuh) found that most of the doors were now closed to his pursuit of his mission. The protection which had been afforded him by his uncle had opened up numerous opportunities for the spread of the message of Islam and for providing others with guidance, admonition, and instruction, all of which had made it possible for him to achieve some measure of success in the work he had been given to do.

After Abu Talib's death, however, all of these opportunities were cut off. Try as he might, all he met with was resistance and hostility, and wherever he went, he found doors shut in his face, as it were. He would take his message somewhere only to be forced to return with nothing to show for his efforts; no one listened to him and no one believed in him. On the contrary, everyone either mocked him or denounced him. It was a source of grief to him that he was unable to achieve any visible results in his pursuit of the

work to which God had assigned him, and it was for this reason that he called this year "the year of sorrow."

In fact, the grief he experienced over finding that no one believed in the truth he had brought was overwhelming to him most of the time. Hence, in order to relieve him of some of the sadness he was feeling, God revealed certain verses containing words of solace and comfort. Such verses reminded him that he had been mandated to do no more than deliver the message, and that for this reason, there was no need to lose heart over those who refused to respond or believe. Read, for example, the following verses:

We know indeed the grief which their words cause you (O Muhammad): it is not you that they deny, but it is the Verses of God that the wrongdoers deny. Verily, (many) messengers were denied before you, but with patience they bore the denial, and they were hurt, till Our Help reached them, and none can alter the Words of God. Surely there has reached you the information about the Messengers (before you). And if their aversion (from you) is hard on you, then if you were able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the sky, so that you might bring them a sign (and you cannot do it, so be patient). And had God willed, He could have gathered them together (all) unto true guidance, so never be of the ignorant" (Qur'an 6: 33-35).

The Apostle's Emigration to al-Ta'if

When the Qurayshites had persecuted the Prophet (pbuh) to the extent we have described above, he left Mecca for al-Ta'if in order to seek assistance from the tribe of Thaqif; he was also hopeful that they would accept the message he had received from God Almighty. When he (pbuh) arrived in al-Ta'if, he approached a group of men who were, at that time, chieftains in the tribe of Thaqif. He sat down with them, called them to the worship of God alone, and spoke to them about the matter concerning which he had come. However, they received him very inhospitably; in fact, their harshness and ugly words took him utterly by surprise.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then rose to leave, asking them at the very least not to inform the Qurayshites of his visit, but they refused to agree even to this. Not only so, but they stirred up their slaves and simpletons against him, goading them to curse and shout at him. Then, as Zayd Ibn Harithah shielded him with his body, they threw stones at him until his (pbuh) legs bled, and until Zayd had suffered several head fractures.[56]

He (pbuh) eventually reached a garden owned by 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah, and the simpletons of Thaqif who had been chasing him retreated. Weary and exhausted from his wounds, he (pbuh) sought refuge in the shade of a grape arbor, where he sat as the two sons of Rabi'ah looked on. After regaining his composure, he (pbuh) looked up and uttered this supplication:

O God, it is to You that I bring my weakness, my helplessness, and my humiliation. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are the Sustainer of those who are deemed weak, and You are my Sustainer. On whom but You shall I rely? On some distant personage who regards me with displeasure? Or on a foe whom You have given power over me? So long as You are not displeased with me, then I have no cause for dismay. I take refuge in the light of Your face by which the darkness is illuminated, and in which both this world and the next are set aright. The well-being which You bestow upon me is too all-encompassing for You to pour out Your wrath or displeasure upon me. To You I shall continue to turn until I have won Your favor, and there is no power or strength save in You."

When the two sons of Rabi'ah, the owners of the garden, saw the condition he (pbuh) was in, they were moved to compassion. So, summoning a Christian slave boy of theirs by the name of 'Addas, they had him take a plateful of freshly picked grapes to the Messenger of God (pbuh). When 'Addas placed the grapes in his (pbuh) hands, he reached out to take some, saying, "In the name of God," then began to eat.

Astounded, 'Addas said, "By God, these are not words used in this country!"

The Apostle (pbuh) asked him, "What country are you from? A"?nd what is your religion

"I am a Christian," replied the boy, "and I am from Nineva (a village near Mosul)."

The Apostle (pbuh) said to him, "So, you are from the same village as that righteous man, Jonah son of Matta?"

"How would you have heard of Jonah son of Matta?" asked the boy.

"He is my brother," replied the Messenger of God (pbuh). "He was a prophet, and so am I."

Whereupon ‘Addas fell upon the Prophet (pbuh), kissing his head, his hands, and his feet.[57]

According to Ibn Ishaq, the Messenger of God (pbuh) then departed from al-Ta’if to return to Mecca. On his way there, he stopped in Nakhlah and, during the night, got up to pray. As he was praying, a company of jinn passed by and listened to him. When he has finished, they returned to their people as warners, having believed in and responded to what they heard. God Almighty recounts this story in the words:

And (remember, O Muhammad) when We sent towards you a few of the jinns, listening to the Qur’an, when they stood in the presence thereof, they said: “Listen in silence!” And when it was finished, they returned to their people as warners.” They said: “O our people, verily, We have been listening to a Book sent down after Moses, confirming what came before it, it guides to the truth and to a Straight Path. O our people! Respond to God’s caller and believe in him. He (God) will forgive you of your sins, and will save you from a painful torment (Qur’an 46: 29-31).

And:

Say (O Muhammad): “It has been revealed to me that a company of the jinns gave ear (to this divine writ), and thereupon said (unto their fellow beings), ‘Verily, we have heard a wondrous discourse’” (Qur’an 72: 1).

As the Messenger of God (pbuh) then proceeded on his way to Mecca with Zayd Ibn Harithah, Zayd asked him, “How will you enter the city, O Messenger of God, now that they have expelled you?”

“Zayd,” he replied, “God shall provide a way out of the situation which you have witnessed. He will grant victory to His religion and make His prophet known.”

He (pbuh) then sent a man from the tribe of Khuza‘ah to inform al-Muh‘im Ibn ‘Adi that he would be entering Mecca under his protection, and Muh‘im agreed to this.[58]

Lessons and Principles

If we reflect upon the journey made by the Prophet (pbuh) to al-Ta’if and the suffering which it entailed for him, as well as the manner in which he returned to Mecca, we derive the following principles:

The first principle we discover here is that the various types of suffering which the Messenger of God (pbuh) endured, and most particularly that which befell him on his journey to al-Ta’if, are examples which he (pbuh) set for others to follow. For just as he came to deliver to us the correct doctrine concerning the universe and its Maker, as well as the regulations pertaining to worship, morals, and the various transactions in which we engage in our everyday lives, he likewise came to teach Muslims their duty to patiently endure tribulation, showing them in practical terms how they are to “Endure and be more patient (than your enemy)” (Qur’an 3: 200) as God has commanded them.

The Prophet (pbuh) has also taught us how to worship in the most practical terms, saying, “Pray as you have seen me praying” and, “Base your rites of worship upon those I practice.” Based on this same principle, he endured the most grueling ordeals for the sake of the message of Islam, thereby saying, in effect, to all those who come after him seeking to spread the same message, “Endure patiently as you have seen me do.” Hence, it is clear that patient endurance and the struggle to overcome adversity are among the most important principles of Islam with which he (pbuh) was sent.

Someone who takes a merely superficial view of the Prophet’s (pbuh) journey to al-Ta’if might mistakenly conclude that he was defeated there, that he allowed his vexation to get the better of him, and that he found burdensome the trials and tribulations which afflicted him in this situation. It was this – according to such reasoning – that led him to voice such a supplication after resting in the garden of the sons of Rabi‘ah. However, the reality is that he (pbuh) received all these trials willingly, swallowing their

bitterness with patience and in anticipation of the divine approval which awaited him as a result. Otherwise, it would have been possible for him – had he so chosen – to take revenge on the foolish men who had tormented him and the tribal leaders who had urged them on in their cruelty and responded to him in such a hateful manner. However, he chose not to do so. Evidence for this may be found in the following hadith, related by both Muslim and al-Bukhari, on the authority of 'A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, who said to the Messenger of God (pbuh), "O Messenger of God (pbuh), have you ever gone through any experience more trying than the battle of Uhud?"

He (pbuh) replied, "The most difficult thing I ever suffered at the hands of your people was on the day of al-'Aqabah, when I presented myself to Ibn 'Abd Yalil Ibn 'Abd Kilal, and he did not respond as I had hoped. I departed, feeling anxious and lost, and I remained in this state until I reached Qarn al-Tha' alib. Then I looked up, and what should I find but that I was in the midst of a cloud which had overshadowed me. When I looked to see what was happening, I saw Gabriel in the cloud, calling to me and saying, 'God Almighty has heard the words spoken to you by your people and the manner in which they responded to you. Moreover, He has sent you the angel of the mountains, for you to give him whatever command you so desire.' Then the angel of the mountains called out to me with a greeting of peace, saying, 'O Muhammad, God has heard the words spoken to you by your people, and I am the angel of the mountains. Your Sustainer has sent me to you, for you to give me whatever command you wish. What, then, do you command? If you want me to bring the two great mountains of Mecca down upon them, I will do so.' But I said, 'All I wish is for God to bring forth from among them those who worship God alone and associate no partners with Him.'"

Thus, by means of the things he suffered, the Messenger of God (pbuh) taught his Companions and the Muslim nation which emerged after them to practice the art of patient endurance in the face of all the adversity and tribulation which they might face for God's sake.

Someone might ask: Why, then, did he raise his voice in complaint? And what is the meaning of his prayer of supplication, whose words and phrasing indicate discontent and annoyance at all the effort he had exerted with nothing to show for it but persecution and distress? The answer to such questions is that complaining to God is a form of piety, while coming before Him in humble entreaty is an expression of the desire to obey and draw near to Him. There is wisdom, then, behind tribulation and misfortune, one of the most important aspects of which is that they drive the sufferer to the door of God Almighty, clothing him, as it were, in the garb of servitude. This being the case, there is no incongruity between patient forbearance in the face of calamity and voicing one's complaints to God Almighty. On the contrary, the Messenger of God (pbuh) taught us to do both: Through his unwavering forbearance in the face of affliction, he taught us that this is the duty of all Muslims, and particularly those engaged in the propagation of Islam; and through his untiring entreaties to the All-Knowing God, he taught us our duty to worship and what this requires.

Even so, no matter what heights of nobility the soul manages to attain, it remains limited to the sphere of its humanity. Human beings are naturally disposed to sensation and feeling, including the experiences of pleasure and pain, with the tendency to seek out the former and shrink from the latter. What this means is that even as the Messenger of God (pbuh) resigned himself to suffering all manner of affliction for the sake of his Sustainer, he was, nevertheless, a human being who was pained by ill-treatment and who found consolation in ease and felicity. However, he preferred affliction, however painful, to comfort, however pleasant, if this meant earning the approval of his Sustainer and fulfilling his duty to serve and worship Him. This, no doubt, is the ideal expression of the desire to obtain divine favor, just as it reveals the meaning of the mandate to serve and worship God alone.

Second: If you reflect upon his (pbuh) various confrontations with his people, you will find that although the persecution which he suffered may have been cruel, there was, in each situation, a divine response to

the ill-treatment and to the aims of those who engaged in it. Such divine responses served to console the Apostle (pbuh), lest he become so overwhelmed by pain or discontent that he would succumb to despair.

Hence, in the case of his journey to al-Ta'if and the suffering to which it led, both in terms of the persecution he endured and the disappointment he experienced, you find a clear divine response to the foolishness of those who had harassed and pursued him, a response which came in the form of an apology for their harshness and stupidity. This apology comes through the Christian man, 'Addas, when he presents the Prophet (pbuh) with a plate of grapes, then falls upon him with kisses when he (pbuh) informs him that he is a prophet.

In order to convey the scene in which this apology was delivered, we need only to quote from Mushafá Sadiq al-Rafi'i , may he rest in peace, in connection with this account. He says:

What extraordinary signs of the divine decree are to be found in this story!

Benevolence, noble-heartedness, and reverence hastened forward with an apology for depravity, foolishness, and impetuosity, and kisses following words of enmity.

The two sons of Rabi'ah had been mortal foes of Islam, included among those who went to Abu Talib -- the uncle of the Prophet (pbuh) and one of the leading men of Quraysh – asking him to let them have their way with him (pbuh), or confront him (pbuh) in battle until one of the two sides should perish. However, barbaric instinct gave way to the humane impulse brought by this religion, since the future of religion belongs not to instinct, but to reason.

Christianity came forward to embrace and honor Islam, since one sound religion is bound to another just as brother is to brother, the only difference between them being that the origin of brotherhood is blood, while the origin of religion is the mind.

The symbolism of the divine decree in this story is brought to completion in the picking of the grapes, delectable and full of sweetness. Their reception in the name of God serves as a symbol of the magnificent Islamic 'cluster' which was filled with individual fruits, each one of them an empire.[59]

Third: The manner in which Zayd Ibn Harithah, may God be pleased with him, protected the Apostle (pbuh) from the stones of foolish men with his own body – even to the point of suffering several fractures to his skull -- is an example for us of the manner in which Muslims should conduct themselves toward those who lead the way in spreading the message of Islam, protecting and defending them with their very lives should the need arise.

This was the attitude demonstrated by the Companions, may God be pleased with them all, toward the Messenger of God (pbuh). Since he (pbuh) is no longer present among us in the flesh, it would not be possible for us to defend him in the way in which they did, of course. However, this can be accomplished in another way, namely, by our surrendering ourselves unstintingly to trials and suffering for the sake of the Islamic message just as the Prophet (pbuh) did. There must be those who lead others in spreading the message of Islam in every age, thereby succeeding the Prophet (pbuh) in carrying out his mission. Hence, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to rally around such leaders in all sincerity, willing to redeem them with all they have, if need be, just as the Muslims who accompanied the Messenger of God (pbuh) were willing to do.

Fourth: Ibn Ishaq's account of the jinns' listening to the Prophet (pbuh) as he prayed by night at Nakhlah is evidence that such unseen beings, do, in fact, exist, that they are under mandate to obey and worship God, and that there are those of them who believe in God and His messenger, while others of them do not. This evidence is rendered indisputable by the fact that the Qur'an itself speaks of them in clear terms. Such passages include the verses which appear at the beginning of the chapter entitled al-Jinn as well as the passage quoted above from the chapter entitled, Al-Ahqaf:

And lo! We caused a group of unseen beings to incline towards thee, (O Muhammad,) so that they might give ear to the Qur'an; and so, as soon as they became aware of it, they said (unto one another), "Listen in silence!" and when (the recitation) was ended, they returned to their people as warners. They said, "O our people! Behold, we have been listening to a Scripture revealed after (that of) Moses, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains (of the Torah); it guides towards the truth, and onto a straight way. "O our people! Respond to God's call and have faith in Him: He will forgive (whatever is past) of your sins and deliver you from grievous suffering (in the life to come)" (Qur'an 46: 29-31).

This account, which is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and by Ibn Hisham in his biography of the Prophet (pbuh), is mentioned likewise by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhi, whose version of the story differs in certain details. We now present the account as narrated by al-Bukhari with a chain of authority going back to Ibn 'Abbas:

He (pbuh) set forth in the direction of the 'Ukaé market with a group of his Companions. At this time, the demons had been denied access to reports from the heavens, and shooting stars were sent forth against them (to prevent them from ascending there). They then returned and asked, "Why is it that we have been denied access to news from heaven, and that these shooting stars have been sent forth against us?" They were told, "Nothing has cut you off from news from heaven but a certain event which has occurred. Travel throughout the earth, then, in order to learn what this event is." So they departed, traveling throughout the earth to see what this occurrence was that had deprived them of news from heaven. Now, those of them who traveled in the direction of Tihamah happened upon the Messenger of God (pbuh) while he was in Nakhlah on his way to the 'Ukaé market. When they saw him, he was praying the dawn prayer with his Companions, and when they heard the Qur'an, they gave ear to it, saying, "This is what has prevented us from receiving news from heaven!" Thereupon they returned to their people and said to them, "O people, we have heard an extraordinary recitation which guides to the truth. We have believed in what it says, and henceforth, we will associate nothing and no one with our Sustainer." In this regard, God revealed to His prophet (pbuh) the following words: "Say: 'It has been revealed to me that a group of the unseen beings have listened (to the Qur'an)."[60]

The accounts related by Muslim and al-Tirmidhi are in agreement with this, except that at the beginning of the account they add the words, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) neither recited to the unseen beings nor did he see them... " We read in Fath al-Bari, "It appears that al-Bukhari omitted this statement intentionally, because Ibn Mas'ud has shown definitively that the Prophet (pbuh) did, in fact, recite to the unseen beings." Mention of this is made by Muslim who, following this hadith on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, narrates Ibn Mas'ud's hadith on the authority of the Prophet (pbuh), who said, "I was approached by the chief of the unseen beings, so I went forth with him and recited the Qur'an to him." He also notes that the differences between these two versions of the hadith may be reconciled by considering that the encounter with the unseen beings occurred more than once.[61]

In addition, the accounts related by Muslim, al-Bukhari, and al-Tirmidhi differ from that of Ibn Ishaq in two respects: (1) Ibn Ishaq's account contains no reference to the fact that he (pbuh) was praying with his Companions; rather, it indicates that he was praying alone, whereas the other accounts indicate that he was praying with his Companions; and (2) Ibn Ishaq's account does not specify that he (pbuh) was praying the dawn prayer, whereas the others do.

Ibn Ishaq's account raises no questions; the other version, however, is problematic in two ways. The first difficulty arises from the fact that on the Prophet's (pbuh) journey to and from al-Ta'if, he had no one with him but Zayd Ibn Harithah. How, then, could he have been praying with a group of his Companions? As for the second difficulty, it consists in the fact that the five daily prayers were not established until the time of the Prophet's miraculous night journey from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to the al-Aqsá Mosque in Jerusalem and his ascension to the seven heavens (Al-Isra' wa-al-Mi'raj), which occurred after the

Apostle's (pbuh) journey to al-Ta'if in the judgment of many scholars. How, then, could he be said to have been praying the dawn prayer?

The first difficulty can be resolved by noting that the Prophet (pbuh) may have met some of his Companions upon his arrival in Nakhlah (a place near Mecca), then prayed the dawn prayer with them. As for the second difficulty, it may be dealt with by saying that the incident of the unseen beings listening to the Prophet (pbuh) reciting the Qur'an was repeated on more than one occasion. We possess one account of this event on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, and another, differing account on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud, both of which are well-attested.[62] If, on the other hand, the Prophet's (pbuh) night journey and ascension are said to have taken place before his journey to al-Ta'if, then no difficulty arises in the first place.

What is important to understand from all of this is that Muslims are required to believe that such unseen beings exist, that they are living beings created by God, and that they have been commanded to worship Him just as we have. If we are unable to perceive them with our senses, this is because God Almighty has caused them to be imperceptible to human vision, knowing, as we do, that our eyes are capable of seeing only certain types of phenomena, to a certain degree, and given certain conditions.

Hence, the existence of these creatures is supported by reliable reports which have been handed down by numerous, distinct chains of narrators and which are found both in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For this reason, there is unanimous agreement among Muslims that the denial of their existence excludes one from the fold of Islam, since this involves the denial of something the existence of which follows necessarily from the truths of the religion itself.

In this connection, we must not fall into the trap of relying solely on that which appears to our senses, claiming not to believe in anything which is not consistent with "science" and boasting of the fact that we do not believe in jinn because we have never seen them or perceived their presence. To think in such a way is to fall prey to a kind of pedantic, presumptuous ignorance, which requires us to deny the existence of many phenomena which are known with a certainty to exist for the simple reason that they cannot be seen. As one well-known scientific principle states: Non-perception does not necessitate non-existence. In other words, your failure to see something for which you are searching does not necessarily mean that it is lost or nonexistent.

Fifth: What effect was had on the Prophet's state of mind by all that he experienced and suffered during his journey to and from al-Ta'if? The answer to this question may be seen clearly through what the Prophet (pbuh) said to Zayd Ibn Harithah when the latter asked him (pbuh), "How will you enter Mecca, O Messenger of God, now that they have expelled you?"

"Zayd," he replied with confident tranquility, "God will provide a way out of the situation which you have witnessed. He will grant victory to His religion and make His prophet known."

Hence, what he endured in al-Ta'if, together with all of the cruelty and torment he had suffered in Mecca, had no effect on his confidence in God Almighty or the strength of his determination to move forward. Nor was this merely the confidence of someone who happened to have been blessed with an extra measure of stamina or will-power; rather, it was the certainty of prophethood which had been fixed in his heart. He knew that he was simply carrying out his Sustainer's command and treading the path which God had bid him to; consequently, he had no doubt that God would bring his destiny to fulfillment.

Thus, as we have seen, trials and obstacles on the path of spreading the message of Islam must never deter us from moving forward or cause us to succumb to a spirit of resignation or passivity. So long as we are acting in response to the guidance provided by faith in God, then those of us who have received our strength from God have no need to suffer despair or fatigue, for as long as God is the Commander, He will likewise be the One to lend us assistance and support. Faintness and despondency will afflict us only when

we are acting on principles other than those God has given us to live by, for in this case, we are relying for success on our own powers and efforts. We know, however, that our resources are limited by the very nature of our humanity, and it is only to be expected that after prolonged suffering, pain, and adversity, both our strength and our determination will turn to languor and despair.

The Miracle of the Prophet's Night Journey (Al-Isra') and Ascension (Al-Mi'raj)

The Isra' is the term used to refer to the night journey with which God honored His prophet from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to al-Aqsá Mosque in Jerusalem. As for the Mi'raj, or the "Ascension," it refers to the journey which succeeded it, in which he (pbuh) was lifted up to the highest reaches of heaven, then brought to a place where no other creature, be it angel, human being, or jinn, would have access to the knowledge of what he beheld. There has been disagreement as to the exact date on which this divine honor was bestowed upon the Prophet (pbuh), with some holding that it took place during the tenth year of his (pbuh) mission, and others maintaining that it occurred after this. According to Ibn Sa'd's al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, it took place eighteen months prior to the Hejira.

It is agreed upon by the majority of Muslims that these journeys took place both in body and in spirit; hence, they are looked upon as one of the miracles with which God honored His Prophet (pbuh). Muslim and al-Bukhari, both of whom relate a detailed account of the event, tell us that he (pbuh) traveled on a steed known as Buraq, which was larger than a donkey and smaller than a mule, and whose strides were so immense that with a single step, he would carry the Prophet (pbuh) as far as the eye could see. After he (pbuh) entered al-Aqsá Mosque and performed two cycles of prayer, he was approached by the angel Gabriel, who offered him one vessel containing wine and another containing milk. When he (pbuh) chose the milk, Gabriel said to him, "You have chosen the inborn human nature." The Prophet (pbuh) was then led up to the first heaven, then the second, then the third, and so on until he reached the lotus tree located in the seventh heaven, where God granted him specific revelations. These revelations included the command to Muslims to perform the five daily ritual prayers, which began as a total of fifty prayers to be performed at various times of the day and night[63]

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) spoke with people the following morning about what he had witnessed, the polytheists gathered to make sport of this entertaining piece of news. Some of them challenged him (pbuh) to describe to them the ancient sites in Jerusalem, since he claimed to have prayed there. However, when the Prophet (pbuh) visited the mosque in Jerusalem, it had not occurred to him to look all around him and memorize the number of columns there or its various contours. Hence, God Almighty revealed these things to him, causing them to appear before his very eyes. He then began giving them a detailed description of all that they asked him about. Muslim and al-Bukhari relate that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "When the Qurayshites disbelieved me, I stood in Ishmael's precinct (the northern wall of the Ka'bah) and God revealed Jerusalem to me, so I began telling them about its distinguishing features as I looked upon it."

As for Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, some of the polytheists informed him of what the Prophet (pbuh) had said, hoping that he would find it too outlandish to believe. However, he told them, "If he said this, then he is telling the truth, and I would believe him even if he claimed to have experienced things more wondrous than these."

On the morning following his (pbuh) night journeys, the angel Gabriel instructed the Prophet (pbuh) in how to perform the five daily prayers and the times at which they are to be performed. Until this time, he (pbuh) had been accustomed to performing two cycles of prayer each morning and each evening as

Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him, had done.

Lessons and Principles

Some researchers are fond of exaggerating the merely human aspect of the life of the Prophet (pbuh), going to great lengths to show that his (pbuh) life was devoid of the supernatural and the miraculous. Such writers claim that the Prophet (pbuh) placed no importance on such things and paid no attention to those who demanded them. According to such thinkers, the Messenger of God (pbuh) constantly affirmed that miracles and the supernatural were none of his concern, and that he was incapable of such. In order to prove their point, they cite the Qur'anic words, "Say: 'Signs are with God alone'" (Qur'an 6: 109). Hence, the reader begins to imagine that his (pbuh) life contained virtually none of the miracles and signs with which God usually upholds His true prophets.

If we make a careful examination of the source of this theory concerning the Messenger of God (pbuh), we will find that it was originally the idea of certain Orientalists and foreign scholars the likes of Gustav Le Bon, Kant, Hume, Goldziher, and others. The basis for this theory is, essentially, a lack of belief in the Creator of miracles, since if one possesses a firmly rooted faith in God Almighty, then it becomes easy to believe in the possibility of any number of events; in fact, one no longer views anything in the universe as meriting the label "miracle."

This theory was latched onto subsequently by a number of Muslims who, unfortunately for the Islamic world, marshalled all of their efforts and knowledge to promote the ideas of such foreign thinkers. However, the sole basis for their doing so was that they had been led astray by these people's deception, allowing their eyes to be dazzled by the appearance of the scientific renaissance which had swept through Europe. Such Muslims include Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, Muhammad Farid Wajdi, and Husayn Haykal.

When this phenomenon came to the attention of those who make it their vocation to plant skepticism in Muslims' minds by means of their intellectual invasion of the Muslim world, they found that the things being said by Muslims themselves opened up new horizons for their intellectual offensive, providing them with tools by means of which they could dispense with their former method of making open war on Islamic doctrine and planting atheistic notions in people's heads. As a consequence, they began focusing on particular qualities of the Messenger of God (pbuh), such as heroism, genius, and leadership, speaking of them in words of admiration and praise and depicting the Prophet's life as being devoid of any supernatural or miraculous dimension. In so doing, they sought to instill a new image of the Prophet (pbuh) in the minds of Muslims, be it the image of "Muhammad the genius," "Muhammad the leader," or "Muhammad the hero" – in short, anything but that of "Muhammad the Prophet and Messenger." The aim for which such thinkers strive may also be seen in their use of the term "Mohammedans" in place of the term "Muslims." As for the phenomena of revelation, the supernatural, and the miraculous, all of which are necessary concomitants of prophethood, they had now been cast forth into the realm of what is referred to as "mythology," since revelation and prophethood are considered to be the foremost of all miracles.

Once the image of the Prophet (pbuh) is altered in this fashion, then it goes without saying that all those individuals and nations who gather around the Messenger of God (pbuh) and answer his call will be viewed as responding to nothing but his genius and his leadership skills! However, we may ask: To what extent are such conceptions borne out by the actual life of the Prophet (pbuh)? Let us approach this question by means of a logical, objective inquiry. First, if we reflect once again on the phenomenon of prophethood and revelation (which has been discussed in detail above), we find that these are the most prominent features in his (pbuh) life. Prophethood is, itself, a supernatural occurrence in the sense that it cannot be measured in terms of our everyday, empirical criteria. The element of the miraculous is present,

then, in the Prophet's very being, with the consequence that the only way to deny the existence of the supernatural and the miraculous in his (pbuh) life is to destroy the meaning of prophethood itself and/or to eliminate it from his life.

This, of course, would mean denying the religion itself. This conclusion is not stated directly by some Orientalists, who content themselves with highlighting the Messenger of God's genius, courage, and skillful administration of affairs. However, they set forth the premises for such a conclusion, which appears as a matter of course once the premises are accepted. There are, nevertheless, a number of writers who have stated this conclusion openly. Among such writers are Shibli Shumayl, who referred to faith in religion as faith in "the impossible miracle"![64] As my reader is no doubt aware, it is meaningless to discuss the basis for denying or affirming particular miracles so long as the origin of the religion itself is subject to doubt or negation.

Secondly, if we reflect on the events of his (pbuh) life, we find that God Almighty enabled him to perform numerous miracles, the reports of which are irrefutable, since they were transmitted to us through sound, undisputed[65] chains of transmission and which, upon study and reflection, will lead one to complete confidence in their reliability. Such accounts include the hadith concerning the flow of water from between his noble fingers. It is related by al-Bukhari in his section on "Ablutions," by Muslim in his section on "Virtues," by Malik in his al-Muwahha' under the heading, "Ritual Purity," as well as by other hadith scholars on the basis of many different chains of transmission. Al-Zarqani quotes al-Qurtubi as saying that, "the flow of water from between his (pbuh) fingers took place in several different places and in scenes of the greatest significance; moreover, the relevant accounts have been passed down through so many different chains of narrators that, taken together, they form the basis for complete certainty concerning their reliability."[66]

Another such miracle is that of the moon's being cleft asunder when the polytheists asked him (pbuh) to bring this about. The hadith concerning this event is narrated by al-Bukhari in his section on "Hadiths Concerning the Prophets," by Muslim in his section on "The Nature of the Resurrection," and by the majority of other hadith scholars. According to Ibn Kathir, "This event is narrated in undisputed hadiths based on sound chains of transmission." It is agreed upon among Muslim scholars that this event took place during the time of the Prophet (pbuh), and that it is one of his most awe-inspiring miracles.[67]

Such miracles also include the Prophet's night journeys, which are the subject of the present discussion; these events, which are narrated in an agreed-upon hadith whose reliability is undeniable, are viewed by virtually all Muslims as among the Prophet's most breathtaking miracles. It is astonishing, therefore, that those who propagate the notion that the Prophet (pbuh) was nothing but a genius, ruling out the miraculous and the supernatural as elements in his life, pay no attention to these definitive hadiths, whose accuracy is beyond dispute. They fail to discuss such hadiths either negatively or positively, as if the books of prophetic hadiths were not replete with them, and although each one has been passed down through no fewer than ten distinct chains of narrators. It is clear, however, that the reason for this lack of attention is the desire to sidestep the serious difficulty which these writers would be certain to face were they to make a serious examination of these hadiths, which stand in direct conflict with the theory which they seek to propound.[68]

Thirdly: If we give careful thought to the word "miracle," we find that it has no meaning in and of itself, but that what is meant by this word is relative and abstract. A "miracle," as people have customarily used the term, is anything which departs from the usual and the familiar. Moreover, that which is "usual" or "familiar" changes with the times, just as it differs according to the society and culture with which one is dealing and the state of such societies' knowledge and understanding. How numerous are those phenomena which, some time ago, would have been viewed as miraculous but which have now entered the

realm of the familiar and the ordinary; conversely, many things which are considered mundane in an educated, cultured environment become "miracles" when presented to primitive, uneducated individuals.

In fact, any discerning individual will realize that both the familiar and the unfamiliar are, in essence, miracles. After all, the planets and stars are miracles; the movement of the heavenly bodies is a miracle; the law of gravity is a miracle; the human nervous system is a miracle; the body's circulatory system is a miracle; the human spirit is a miracle; human beings themselves are a miracle. How truly did the French scientist Chateau-Briand speak when he referred to the human being as "the metaphysical animal," that is, the living being which is characterized by the invisible and the unknown.

However, after long familiarity with such phenomena, human beings lose sight of their miraculous dimension. In their ignorance and pride, they suppose that miracles are only those things which go beyond what has become familiar and ordinary to them! In fact, they take the familiar and the ordinary as a standard by which to determine whether to believe or disbelieve in something! It is astounding that such ignorance is displayed by even the most civilized, educated individuals.

A bit of reflection is sufficient to make clear that the God who created the miracle of this entire universe would not find it difficult to add another miracle or to alter some of the systems on which the world is based. Such reflection is evident in the words of the English Orientalist, William Jones, who stated, "The power which created the world is not incapable of deleting something therefrom or of adding something thereto. It is easy to say that such an action is inconceivable; however, the phenomenon which is described as 'inconceivable' is not as inconceivable as the very existence of the world!" What Jones means is that if this world did not exist, and if someone who denies the possibility of the miraculous and the supernatural and cannot conceive of their existence were told that "such and such a world will come to be," he would reply without hesitation that such a thing is inconceivable. However, such a person's denial of the conceivability of the world's existence would be far more serious than a denial of the possibility of this or that miracle.

This, then, is what every Muslim should understand about the Apostle (pbuh) and the miracles which God bestowed upon him.

Fourthly: We need to consider the connection between the miracle of the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension and the events which were taking place around him (pbuh) at that time. The Apostle (pbuh) suffered many trials at the hands of the Qurayshites, the last of which was what he went through on his journey to al-Ta'if discussed above. In the supplication with which he (pbuh) approached his Lord after he had gone to rest in the garden owned by the two sons of Rabi'ah, we find an expression of the same feelings of weakness experienced by all people, and of their need for someone to come to their aid and defense – feelings which reveal human beings' servitude to Almighty God. Moreover, the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) sought refuge in his Lord sheds light on what it means to bring one's complaints before God, as well as his (pbuh) desire for the Almighty's healing and succor. He also appears to have been afraid that what he was suffering was a result of God's wrath against him for some reason; it was this fear that moved him to utter the words, "So long as Thou art not displeased with me, then I have no cause for dismay."

Given these events, the Nocturnal Journey and Ascension which he (pbuh) experienced thereafter revealed God's approval of him and served to renew his determination and courage. They provided confirmation that what he had been enduring at the hands of his people was not due to God's having abandoned him or to divine displeasure with him (pbuh); rather, they showed that this is God's manner of dealing with all those who love Him and whom He loves. It is, in short, the path taken by the Islamic mission in all ages and generations.

It likewise behooves us to reflect on the meaning to be found in the Prophet's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem. The temporal coincidence between his (pbuh) being transported by night to Jerusalem and his

being lifted into the seven heavens provides unequivocal evidence of the high station and sanctity which God has bestowed upon this city; it also points clearly to the powerful connection between the messages with which God sent Jesus son of Mary and Muhammad son of 'Abdullah, may blessings and peace be upon them both, and to the bond of the single religion with which God Almighty has sent all of His prophets.

These supernatural events point, likewise, to the commitment which Muslims of all times and ages should demonstrate to preserving this holy land and protecting it from the covetous aspirations of intruders and the enemies of religion. It is as if the divine mercy is urging the Muslims of this age not to weaken, flag, or be cowardly in the face of Zionist aggression against this sacred land, but rather, to purify it of the defilement which they have brought upon it and restore it to its believing owners.

And who knows? Perhaps it was the reality of this magnificent nocturnal trek which caused Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, may God have mercy upon him, to fight with such heroic fervor, devoting his entire being to the cause of repelling the Crusaders' assaults on this holy spot until he succeeded in sending them away in defeat.

As for the Prophet's choice of the milk rather than the wine when these were presented to him by the Archangel Gabriel, may peace be upon him, this is symbolic of the fact that Islam is the religion of authentic human nature; in other words, it is the religion which, in its doctrine and all of its precepts, is in perfect comformity with the requirements of the true, inborn human nature. There is nothing in Islam which conflicts with this nature, and if this innate human disposition were in the form of a physical body, Islam would be the garment which had been tailor-made for it.

This fact is one of the secrets behind Islam's spread and the speed with which people came to accept it, for no matter how advanced or civilized human beings become, and no matter how much contentment they may enjoy on the material level, their fundamental human inclinations remain unchanged: They continue to seek release from bondage to burdensome formalities and complexities which distance them from their true nature, and Islam is the only system which answers to such needs, which spring from the deepest parts of the human psyche.

Fifthly: The Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place both spiritually and physically, a fact which is agreed upon by the majority of Muslims, both those who lived in the earliest days of Islam and those who have succeeded them. In his commentary on Muslim's Sahih, al-Nawawi states:

The truth which is agreed upon by most people – that is, by most of the forefathers of Islam, as well as the majority of the later jurisprudents, hadith scholars, and Muslim theologians – is that the Prophet (pbuh) was taken bodily on his nocturnal journey. This is what is indicated by the reports of this event if one studies them thoroughly. It is not permissible to deviate from such reports' literal meaning unless there is clear evidence which would lead one to do so; moreover, the belief that these events occurred in the physical realm involves no inherent impossibility which would require us to interpret them metaphorically.[69]

In his commentary on al-Bukhari, Ibn Hajar states,

The Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place on a single night; moreover, they occurred when the Prophet (pbuh) was in a waking state, and involved both his spirit and his body. This is the position held by the majority of hadith scholars, jurisprudents, and Muslim theologians, and it is this belief which is supported by the literal meaning of the sound reports pertaining to these events. There is no reason to reject this view, since there is no logical reason to rule it out as an impossibility such that it would require a metaphorical interpretation.[70]

One incontestable indication that the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place both spiritually and physically is the fact that, as we have mentioned above, the idolaters of Quraysh found the

report preposterous and were quick to disbelieve it. If it had been simply a matter of a vision which he (pbuh) had experienced, and if he had related it to them as such, then there would have been no cause for incredulity or disapproval; after all, there is no limit to what one can "see" when asleep, and visions such as these can be experienced just as easily by the Muslim and the unbeliever. Moreover, if the Prophet (pbuh) had reported his experience as a mere vision of sorts, his opponents would not have asked him to describe the doors and columns of al-Aqsá Mosque in Jerusalem as a means of challenging him and forcing him to admit that he was in error.

As for the question of how these miracles came about and how the mind is to conceive of them, the answer is simple: The same way in which all other miracles in the universe come about! As we have noted above, all the phenomena in this cosmos of ours are nothing, in essence, but miracles; hence, just as the mind can conceive easily of such phenomena as these, it can, likewise, conceive of events such as the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension.

When looking for the story of the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension, beware of relying upon what is referred to as The Assension by Ibn 'Abbas. Attributed falsely to Ibn 'Abbas, this book is a mere fabrication, composed of a collection of specious hadiths which are devoid of any foundation. The person responsible for compiling this book wished to attribute falsehoods to Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him. Every educated reader will be aware that Ibn 'Abbas was innocent of any and all such fabrications, that he never wrote a book about the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension and that, in fact, the writing movement in Islam did not commence until the late Umayyad era.

When people with evil intentions came upon this book and found that it contained falsehoods attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) which could serve to shake many people's faith in Islam, they set about promoting it and urging others to read it. (One of the individuals who lauded the book was Dr. Luwis 'Awad, a fact which will come as no surprise to those who are familiar with his writings.) Such people have promoted this book despite the fact that they, of all people, are most aware that it is wrongly attributed to Ibn 'Abbas and that the hadiths which it contains are spurious. However, they are quick to treat a falsehood as a truth if it can serve to confuse the minds of Muslims and make it more difficult for them to comprehend and appreciate their religion.

The Prophet's Appeal to the Tribes and the First Conversions of the Helpers (Ansar) [71] into Islam

Throughout this period of time, the Prophet (pbuh) made it his practice during every year's pilgrimage season to present his message to the tribes which had come to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, reciting to them the Book of God and calling them to belief in the One Deity; however, no one responded to his pleas.

Ibn Sa'd tells us in al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá that:

Each year during the pilgrimage season, the Messenger of God (pbuh) would accompany the pilgrims as they passed through 'Ukaé, Mijannah, and Dhu al-Majaz, calling upon them to defend him in order that he might deliver the messages he had received from his Lord and promising them Paradise in return; however, he obtained no response from anyone. He used to say to them, "O people, declare that there is no god but God (Allah), and you will prosper; by voicing this confession, you will gain power over all the Arabs, and non-Arabs will become subservient to you. Not only so, but if you believe, you will be royal personages in Heaven." After he had spoken, Abu Lahab would say to people behind him, "Do not follow him; he has departed from the religion of Quraysh, and he is a liar," after which they would persecute the Messenger of God (pbuh), treating him in the most reprehensible manner.[72]

Ibn Ishaq narrates on the authority of al-Zuhri that,

The Prophet (pbuh) came to the tribe of Banu' Amir Ibn Sa'sa'ah, calling them to the worship of the One God and presenting himself to them as God's Messenger. One of the men, whose name was Bayharah Ibn Firas, said, "By God, if I took this young man from Quraysh, I could defeat all the Arabs with him."

Then he continued, saying, 'If we were to pledge allegiance to you, and then God granted you victory over those who oppose you, do you think we would be placed in command after you?"

"Such matters are in the hands of God, who grants authority to whomsoever He wills."

The man replied, "Shall we, then, bare our necks to the Arabs on your behalf, only to have authority given to others when God grants you victory? We have no need of you, then!"[73]

In the eleventh year of his mission, he (pbuh) presented his message to the tribes as he did every year, and while he was at al-'Aqabah (a site located between Miná and Mecca, where stones are thrown as part of the pilgrimage rites at stone-built pillars which stand as symbols of evil), he encountered a group of men from the tribe of al-Khazraj[74] whom God had willed to bless.

"Who are you?" he (pbuh) asked them.

"A group of men from the tribe of al-Khazraj."

"Are you allies of the Jews?"

"Yes," they replied."

"Would you mind sitting down and allowing me to speak with you?" he asked.

"Not at all," they replied.

So they sat down and he (pbuh) invited them to the worship of God Almighty, explaining Islam to them and reciting the Qur'an in their hearing. There was a readiness in their hearts to accept Islam, in part due to their having lived in their own land with Jews, who were known to be people of learning who possessed a divinely revealed scripture. Moreover, whenever a dispute or fight broke out between them and the Jews, the latter would say to them, "A prophet is due to be sent by God in the near future, and when he comes, we will follow him and slay you with him, just as the tribes of 'Ad and Iram were slain!"

Hence, when the Messenger of God (pbuh) spoke to this group of men and called upon them to embrace Islam, they looked at one another and said, "You know this must be the prophet of whom the Jews were speaking when they threatened us. So we mustn't let them be the first to follow him!"

They then entered Islam, saying, "We have now left our people, who have more enmity and ill-will amongst themselves than any other people on earth. Perhaps God will unite them through you. We will call upon them to obey your message, explaining the religion of Islam and urging them to follow it. For if God were to unite them around you, no man would be more powerful than you."

They then departed, promising to meet with the Prophet (pbuh) a year later.[75]

The First Pledge of Allegiance at al-'Aqabah

Islam spread during that year in Medina, and in the following year, twelve men from among the Ansar went on the pilgrimage to Mecca. They met with the Prophet (pbuh) at al-'Aqabah, where they entered into what is referred to as "the first pledge of al-'Aqabah." This pledge involved the men's swearing their allegiance to the Prophet (pbuh) based on the same terms as those which were required of the women who pledged their allegiance to him (pbuh); in other words, the agreement included no requirement that they participate in armed struggle and jihad. (The women's pledge took place on Mount Safa on the day following the conquest of Mecca, after he (pbuh) had concluded his agreement with the men.) The men who took part in this pledge included As'ad Ibn Zurarah, Rafi' Ibn Malik, 'Ubadah Ibn al-Samit, and Abu al-Haytham Ibn al-Tayyihan.

'Ubadah Ibn al-Samit narrates the account of this pledge, saying, We were twelve men, and the Messenger of God (pbuh) said to us, "Come, pledge your allegiance to me, promising not to worship any but the one God; not to steal, not to commit adultery; not to kill your children; not to commit any evil with your bodily members; and not to disobey the Prophet (pbuh) in any good which he commands you to perform. Those who are faithful to their promise will receive their reward from God. Those who fulfill their promise in part and are punished for their failure in this life, will have their failure atoned for through this earthly suffering. As for those who fulfill their promise only in part but whose error is concealed by God in this life, then their fate will be decided by God, who will punish them if He so wills, and pardon them if He so wills." Hence, we pledged our allegiance to him (pbuh) on these terms.[76]

When they wished to depart, the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent with them Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr, instructing him to teach them to recite the Qur'an and to teach them about Islam and the way of life it entails. Hence, he came to be called "the teacher of Medina."

Lessons and Principles

Do you not see the transformation which began to take place in the nature of the response which the Prophet (pbuh) received during these years of his mission? His steadfast endurance and effort had begun to yield results, while the "plant" he had sown through his call to Islam had grown into a shrub whose stems were now sturdy enough to bear their intended fruit. However, before discussing this fruit and the glad tidings that accompanied it, let us take note once again of the nature of the noble forbearance exercised by the Prophet (pbuh) in the face of the momentous adversities which he suffered.

We have seen that the Prophet (pbuh) did not limit his call to Islam to his own people, that is, to the Qurayshites, who spared no effort to subject him to every possible sort of ordeal and affliction. Rather, he used to approach the tribes who came to Mecca from various regions during the Pilgrimage season, presenting himself to them as a guide and inviting them to embrace the treasure of belief in the one God; we have seen, likewise, that he received no response to these efforts. According to a hadith narrated by Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal), the compilers of the six standard books of prophetic Sunnah, as well as al-Hakim, who verified the reliability of its chains of transmission, the Messenger of God (pbuh) used to present his message to people during the Pilgrimage season, saying, "Is there any man among you who would be

willing to take me to his people? The Qurayshites have forbidden me to deliver the words of my Lord!"[77]

For eleven years, the Messenger of God (pbuh – dearer is he to me than my own father and mother!) endured a life devoid of rest and stability. During this period of time, the men of Quraysh lay in wait for him every moment, seeking an opportunity to take his life and persecuting him in every possible way. However, none of this suffering detracted in the least from his firmness and resolve. For eleven years, the Messenger of God (pbuh) suffered an overpowering, dismal sense of alienation from his people, his neighbors, and virtually all of the surrounding communities and tribes; even so, he neither despaired nor succumbed to discontent or anxiety, while his loving intimacy with his Lord remained unaffected.

Eleven years of struggle and steady endurance for the sake of God alone was the price which he (pbuh) paid in order to prepare the way for an Islamic upsurge which would spread to all ends of the world, vanquishing the power of Byzantium and the greatness of Persia, and breaking down the values of entire systems and civilizations. It would have been easy for the Almighty God to establish the foundations of Islamic society without the struggle, hardship and misfortune which the Prophet (pbuh) weathered with such fortitude. However, this is God's manner of dealing with His servants; it was the divine will that, after having been created as His servants by no choice of their own, they should achieve a spirit of reverence, service, and devotion to Him through their own free choices. After all, such a spirit is not acquired without effort, and no distinction can be made between the sincere and the hypocritical without affliction or even martyrdom; nor is it fair for someone to win the prize without first having suffered some sort of damage or loss. Consequently, God has mandated human beings to accomplish two things: (1) to establish the law of Islam and an Islamic society; and (2) to proceed toward this goal along a thorny, arduous path.

Let us now reflect on the fruits which began to appear eleven years after the beginning of the Prophet's mission, including the nature of these fruits and how they grew and developed. First, they came from outside of Quraysh, from sources far removed from his own tribe, despite his close proximity to them and his long-standing contact with them. Why would this be the case?

As we noted in the beginning of this book, the divine wisdom required that the Islamic mission follow a path which would leave no room for doubt in any serious mind concerning its true nature and its origin. In this way, it would be easy for people to believe in the message of Islam, and there would be no cause for anyone to confuse it with other religious messages. Hence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) was unlettered, unable to read and write, he was sent to a nation of unlettered people who had not been enlightened by any civilization and who were not known for being urbane or sophisticated in any way; at the same time, God made him (pbuh) a model of noble morals, integrity, and uprightness.

It was to this same end that the wisdom of Almighty God ensured that his (pbuh) first helpers and supporters came from an environment other than the one in which he had grown up, and from tribes other than his own, lest anyone entertain the notion that the Prophet's call to worship God alone was, in essence, a nationalistic call inspired by the aspirations of his tribe and the circumstances in which he lived. This, in reality, is one of the most unequivocal indicators that divine providence was at work in all aspects of the course of the prophetic mission, lest there be any breach through which it could be attacked by skeptics or by those whose primary occupation in life is to launch intellectual assaults on Islam.

This same thought is expressed by one of the foreign scholars themselves. In The Current State of the Islamic World, we read the following quote from (Etienne) Dinet:

Those Orientalists who attempted to criticize the biography of the Prophet (pbuh) by means of this purely European method spent three-quarters of a century scrutinizing and examining – or so they claimed – in order to destroy what the majority of the Muslims had agreed upon with regard to the biography of their Prophet. Now, after concluding such prolonged, thorough investigations, they should have been able to disprove the Muslims' established views and the well-known accounts of the prophetic biography. But did

they manage to accomplish any of this? The answer is: They were unable to demonstrate anything new whatsoever. In fact, when we make a careful examination of the new opinions brought forth by such Orientalists, be they French, British, German, Belgium, or Dutch, we find nothing but confusion and disarray, with every one of them setting forth a view that contradicts those of the others.[78]

Secondly, if we stop to consider the manner in which the Ansar first began to embrace Islam, it becomes clear that God Almighty had prepared the way for an acceptance of the Islamic message in the life and environment of the city of Medina, and that the city's inhabitants possessed an inward readiness to accept this religion. In what ways did this readiness manifest itself?

The population of Medina was a mixture of its original inhabitants, who were Arab polytheists, and Jews who had emigrated there from various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The polytheists were divided into two major tribes: the Aws and the Khazraj, while the Jews belonged to three different tribes: Banu Qurayéah, Banu al-Nadir, and Banu Qaynuqa'. As was their custom, the Jews had spent a long time engaged in various subterfuges in order to sow hatred and resentment between the Aws and Khazraj tribes. As a consequence, the Arabs had been embroiled in a serious of vicious wars. In his book entitled, Mukhtasar Sirat al-Rasul, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab states that "there was war among them (the Arabs) for one-hundred twenty years."[79]

In the midst of this longstanding enmity, both Aws and Khazraj took allies from among the Jews; the Aws entered into an alliance with Banu Qurayéah, while the Khazraj concluded alliances with Banu al-Nadir and Banu Qaynuqa'. The last battle which took place between the two sides was the Battle of Bu'ath, a few years prior to the Hejira; it was a fierce battle, in which most of their leaders died.

However, while the fighting continued, it happened that whenever there was any conflict between the Arabs and the Jews, the Jews would threaten the Arabs by saying that the time was soon approaching when a prophet would be sent; they claimed that they would be among this prophet's followers, and that together with him, they would slay the Arabs just as the tribes of 'Ad and Iram had been slain.

These circumstances caused the people of Medina to anticipate the coming of this religion; in fact, they pinned great hopes on it, believing that through it, their ranks might be reunited and the causes for their divisions be done away with. This, we are told by Ibn al-Qayyim in Zad al-Ma'ad,[80] was what God did for His Messenger (pbuh) in order to prepare the way for his emigration to Medina, which had been chosen in the divine wisdom as the place from which the approaching Islamic upsurge would fan out to the furthest reaches of the globe.

Thirdly, at the time of the first pledge of al-'Aqabah, a number of leading figures in Medina had embraced Islam, as we have mentioned. So, we may ask: What was the nature of their faith, and what were the limits of the responsibilities which Islam laid upon them? As we have seen, their acceptance of Islam was not merely the utterance of the two testimonies, that "There is no god but God," and "Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Rather, their acceptance of Islam involved inward certainty and the verbal expression of this certainty, followed by a visible commitment to the pledge they had made to the Messenger of God (pbuh) to behave in a manner consistent with Islamic morals, precepts, and principles. Specifically, they had pledged themselves not to worship any but God alone, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to slay their children, not to commit any evil with their bodily members, and not to disobey the Prophet (pbuh) in anything which he might command them to do.

These are the most important features of the Islamic society which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was sent to establish. His mission was not merely to teach people how to utter the Islamic testimony of faith with their lips while persisting in their old perversions, injustices, and corrupt practices. It is true, of course, that one is rightly called a Muslim if he believes in the two testimonies of faith, approves that which is

lawful and disapproves that which is unlawful according to the law of Islam, and believes in those actions which are obligatory for all Muslims. However, belief in the oneness of God and in the message brought by Muhammad (pbuh) is the key to the establishment of a truly humane society, the fulfillment of its laws, and the implementation of its principles, placing sovereignty over all affairs in the hands of God alone. Whenever there is faith in the oneness of God Almighty and in the message of His Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh), this faith must necessarily be accompanied by faith in the sovereignty of God over all things and in the necessity of obeying His law and constitution.

Hence, it is astounding to find that there are individuals who -- dazzled by positive systems and laws, yet unwilling to openly repudiate Islam -- attempt to deal with the Creator and Sovereign of this universe as though they were dealing with a mere human being with whom they could enter into compromises and negotiations. As for their method of negotiation, it involves dividing the life of society between themselves and Islam, granting Islam the mosques and all other facilities and institutions relating to worship, in the context of which Islam can render judgments on people however it sees fit, and granting themselves the society's (political and social) systems, laws, and morals, which they are free to alter however they please!

If the oppressors and megalomaniacs to whom God's messengers were sent and who disbelieved in their messages had taken note of this convenient manner of dealing with the call to submit themselves to the one God, they would not have hesitated to declare themselves Muslims and to feign obedience to Islam, so long as it did not require them to forfeit their control or give up any of their own particular laws and systems; nor would they have had any objection to some phrases they had to repeat or rites they might have to perform. However, they were aware that this religion would require them to come under a new regime in which all governance and legislation belong to God alone. Consequently, they resisted God and His Messenger (pbuh), and refrained from declaring their surrender to God's call.

In clarification of this fact, God warns us against understanding Islam to be nothing but words and phrases, saying, "Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you, and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to the rule of the powers of evil, while they are commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray" (Qur'an 4: 60).

Fourthly, there is no doubt that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was assigned the burden of calling others to submit to the one God; after all, he was God's Messenger to all people, and he had no choice but to deliver the call with which his Lord had entrusted him. But, what about those who enter Islam? What part are they to play in bearing the burden of this call? You will find the answer to this question in the Prophet's sending Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr back to Medina with the twelve men who had pledged their allegiance to him at al-'Aqabah, with instructions to invite the people of Medina to embrace Islam and to teach them how to read the Qur'an, understand its precepts, and perform the daily prayers.

Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr set off happily to carry out the command he had received from the Messenger of God (pbuh), calling the people of Medina to Islam, reciting the Qur'an to them, and teaching them God's precepts. There were times when someone would come in with a spear in his hand, intending to deal Mus'ab a mortal blow; but no sooner had the latter recited some portion of the Book of God or mentioned some of the precepts of Islam than he cast his spear down and took his place along with the others gathered around, surrendering himself to the one God and learning about the Qur'an and the ordinances of Islam. In this manner, Islam spread to every household in Medina, and was spoken of among them night and day.

Do you know who this Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr was? He had been the best-dressed, most pampered, most prosperous, most good-looking young man in all of Mecca. When he entered Islam, however, he put all this luxury and worldly gratification behind him, and set forth to serve the Islamic mission and the Messenger of God (pbuh). In so doing, he endured all manner of hardship, finding his joy in suffering for their sake, until at last he met his end as a martyr in the Battle of Uhud. When he died, he had nothing to wear but a single robe. When they wanted to dress him for burial in this same robe, they found that if they covered his

head with it, his legs stuck out, and if they covered his legs, his head stuck out. When they informed the Messenger of God (pbuh) of this, he wept to think of the comfort and ease which Mus'ab had enjoyed in his earlier days. Then he (pbuh) said, "Place it over his head, and put some lemon grass over his legs."[81]

Hence, the task of communicating the message of Islam belongs not only to God's messengers and prophets, nor even just to their successors and heirs, namely, the scholars who have come after them. Rather, the Islamic mission is an inseparable part of the reality of Islam itself, and it is incumbent upon every Muslim, regardless of his station in life, his profession, or his field of specialization, to carry his share of this burden. After all, the substance of this mission and message is simply "to enjoin what is good and forbid that which is evil," which, in turn, sums up the meaning of the term 'jihad' in Islam, or the struggle in the cause of God. And as you are well aware, jihad is a duty which rests upon the shoulders of every Muslim without exception.

This being the case, you will realize that it is meaningless to speak of "the clergy" in Islamic society when this term is used to refer to a specific group of Muslims. The reason for this is that all those who have embraced Islam – be they male or female, learned or ignorant, and regardless of their particular area of expertise -- have, in so doing, undertaken a pledge to God and to the Prophet (pbuh) to enter into a struggle on behalf of this religion. All Muslims, then, are "clergy." "God has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return" (Qur'an 9: 111); hence, they devote all they have to the establishment of God's religion and to the upholding of His law.

This, however, has nothing to do with the specialized tasks which have been assigned to Islamic scholars in the areas of research, issuing independent judgments on legal questions, shedding light for other Muslims on the meaning of the laws and precepts of their religion, and solving problems which may arise in people's lives in light of the well-established texts of the Islamic law.

The Second Pledge of Allegiance at al-'Aqabah

Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr returned to Mecca during the following pilgrimage season, accompanied this time by a large group of Muslims from Medina who had come out surreptitiously along with the polytheists who were, likewise, coming to Mecca on pilgrimage. Muhammad Ibn Ishaq narrates the following account on the authority of Ka'b Ibn Malik:

The Messenger of God (pbuh) arranged to meet us at al-'Aqabah during the days of al-Tashriq.[82] Hence, when we had completed the hajj, and on the night on which our rendezvous was to take place, we and our fellow tribesmen went to sleep with our camels saddled so that, when the first third of the night had passed, we could set out without being noticed to meet the Messenger of God (pbuh). Our party consisted of seventy-three men and two of our women – Nusaybah Bint Ka'b, and Asma' Bint 'Amr Ibn 'Adi – and we gathered at the mountain pass at al-'Aqabah to await the Messenger of God (pbuh). When he arrived, he was accompanied by his paternal uncle, al-'Abbas Ibn 'Abd al-Muhhalib.

The people then spoke, saying, "Take from us for yourself and for your Lord whatever you see fit."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied by reciting from the Qur'an and urging people to submit themselves to God and follow the path of Islam; then he said, "I hereby make a covenant with you, on condition that you will defend me just as you would defend your women and your children."

Taking the Prophet's hand, al-Bara' Ibn Ma'rur said, "Indeed, by the One who has sent you in truth as a prophet, we shall defend you just as we would our own womenfolk. So receive our pledge of allegiance, O Messenger of God (pbuh). We were raised to be seasoned men of war, and we take pride in this honorable way of life that we inherited from our forefathers."

As al-Bara' was speaking, Abu al-Haytham Ibn al-Tayyihan interjected, saying, "O Messenger of God, there are alliances between us and the Jews which we might sever. If we were to do this and God gave you victory, might you not return to your own people and abandon us?"

The Messenger of God (pbuh) smiled and said, "Nay, but rather, your blood is my blood, and whatever befalls you, befalls me. I belong to you, and you to me. Whomsoever you wage war against, I will fight likewise, and whomsoever you make peace with, I shall make peace with as well."

Prior to this time, the Messenger of God (pbuh) had said, "Send out to me twelve chiefs from among your people, to serve as your protectors."

So they sent out twelve chiefs, nine from the Khazraj tribe and three from Aws. When he (pbuh) met with the men, he gave them the opportunity to withdraw from the momentous responsibility before them, saying, "You are to serve as guardians of your people, just as the disciples of Jesus, Son of Mary, served as his guardians; I, likewise, am a guardian of my people."

The first to take the Prophet's hand in conclusion of this pledge was al-Bara' Ibn Ma'rur, after which he (pbuh) concluded the covenant with the other men who had come.

After we had concluded the pledge, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Disband now to your campsites."

Al-'Abbas Ibn 'Ubadah Ibn Nafalah then spoke, saying, "By the God who has sent you in truth, if you wish,

we will come against the people of Miná with our swords tomorrow."

"We have not been commanded to do so," replied the Prophet (pbuh), "so return to your campsites."

Hence, we returned to our campsites and slept. The following morning, a large company of Qurayshites approached us, saying, "O men of Khazraj, we hear that you have come to this friend of ours with the intent of bringing him out from among us, and that you have pledged to go to war with him against us. But by God, of all the Arabs alive, there is no one we would hate to fight more than you."

Some of the polytheists from our people then went forth, swearing by God, "None of this took place, and we knew nothing of it!" In so saying, they were speaking the truth, for they truly knew nothing of the matter. And as they spoke, we just looked at each other.

Meanwhile, the people hastened away from Mina **to search for us**, having made inquiries about the report and learned that it was true. They overtook Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah at Adhakhir (a site not far from Mecca) as well as al-Mundhir Ibn 'Amr, both of whom were chieftains. But whereas al-Mundhir managed to fight off his pursuers and escape, Sa'd was apprehended. After tying his hands to his neck with his saddlebag lace, they took him into Mecca, beating him and dragging him along by his thick hair.

Sa'd said, "As they were dragging me along, one of the men who was with them approached me and said, 'Woe unto you! Is there no covenant of protection between you and any of the Qurayshites?'

'Actually, there is,' I replied. 'I used to protect the merchants who worked for Jubayr Ibn Muh'im and al-Harithah Ibn Umayyah from anyone who might seek to do them injustice in my territory.'

'Then call their names, for God's sake!' he said.

So I called their names, after which Muh'im Ibn 'Adi and al-Harith Ibn Umayyah came and rescued me from my tormenters."

Ibn Hisham tells us, "When God granted permission to His Messenger (pbuh) to go to war, the war pact involved terms which were not included in the first pledge at al-'Aqabah. This first pledge was known as the women's pledge, because at that time, God had not yet granted His Messenger (pbuh) permission to go to war. Hence, when God did grant him (pbuh) permission to do so, he stipulated that those who took part in the second pledge of al-'Aqabah be prepared to go to war with anyone who opposed the Islamic mission, assuring them of paradise as their reward for fulfilling this commitment."

'Ubadah Ibn al-Samit said, 'We entered into a war pact with the Messenger of God (pbuh), promising to prefer him (pbuh) over ourselves and obey him gladly in ease and in hardship, in comfort and in pain. Moreover, we pledged ourselves never to dispute with others over what is rightly theirs and to speak the truth wherever we may be, not fearing blame from others but rather, fearing God alone."

The first Qur'anic verse in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was granted permission to engage in war is the one in which God Most High says, "Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged – and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them --: those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, 'Our Sustainer is God!' For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, (all) monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in (all of) which God's name is abundantly extolled – would surely have been destroyed (ere now). And God will most certainly succor him who succors His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty" (Qur'an 22: 39-40).[83]

Lessons and Principles

This second pledge at al-'Aqabah is in essential agreement with the first; each of them is, after all, a declaration of entrance into Islam in the presence of the Messenger of God (pbuh) and an agreement to adhere to certain charters and covenants, to be faithful to the religion of God, and to obey the Prophet's commands.

However, there are two significant differences between these two pledges which are worthy of note. The first of these differences is that those who participated in the first pledge of al-'Aqabah numbered only twelve men, whereas the number of those who made the pledge on the second occasion came to more than seventy, including two women. The reason for this difference is that those initial twelve men - along with Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr - returned to Medina, not to shut themselves up in their homes, but rather, to announce the good news of Islam to everyone around them, both men and women, reciting the Qur'an to them and explaining Islam's precepts and laws. It was due to this fact that Islam spread so rapidly during that year in Medina; in fact, by the end of the year, there was no longer a single household into which Islam had not entered, and people's conversation turned frequently to Islam and its unique provisions. The propagation of Islam, then, is the obligation of every Muslim in every age and generation.

The second distinction between the two pledges is that the first one makes no mention of the use of force in the struggle on behalf of Islam, whereas the second pledge contains explicit mention of the necessity of engaging in armed struggle and of defending the Messenger of God (pbuh), calling others to embrace his religion by all means available. The reason for this difference is that those who took part in the first pledge took leave of the Prophet (pbuh) with the understanding that they would meet with him again in the same place during the following hajj season, at which time they would be accompanied by a larger number of Muslims and renew their pledge and covenant. There was no need to pledge their commitment to go to war at the first meeting, since permission to fight had not yet been granted, and since those making the pledge were to meet again with the Messenger of God (pbuh) one year later.

The first pledge at al-'Aqabah, then, was a temporary agreement, being limited to those terms on the basis of which the Prophet (pbuh) would receive the women's pledges at a later time. As for the second pledge, it formed the foundation on the basis of which the Prophet (pbuh) emigrated to Medina. Hence, it was inclusive of all those principles whose legality would be formally established following the Hejira, or emigration to Medina. Such principles included, first and foremost, that of jihad, or struggle for the sake of Islam by all possible means, and defense of the Islamic message by force if need be. For although the legitimacy of this provision had not been revealed by God in Mecca, He had, nevertheless, given the Prophet (pbuh) insight into the fact that it would be legislated in the near future.

This being the case, the legitimacy of fighting in Islam was not firmly established until after the Prophet's emigration to Medina. This is so despite Ibn Hisham's suggestion that this provision was legislated prior to the Hejira at the second pledge of al-'Aqabah. There is, in fact, nothing in the provisions of this pledge to suggest that fighting had been allowed by that time; rather, the Prophet (pbuh) accepted the people's pledge to struggle on behalf of Islam with a view to the future, at which time he would emigrate and come to live among them in Medina. Evidence for this may be found in the statement made by al-'Abbas Ibn 'Ubadah following the pledge, "By the God who has sent you in truth, if you wish, we will come against the people of Miná with our swords tomorrow," and the Prophet's response, namely, "We have not been commanded to do so, so return to your campsites."

It is agreed upon among Muslim scholars that the first Qur'anic verse to sanction the legitimacy of armed struggle is, "Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged – and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them." Al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, and others relate on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that:

When the Prophet (pbuh) was expelled from Mecca, Abu Bakr said, "They have expelled their Prophet; to God do we belong, and to God shall we return. May they perish (for what they have done)." It was in this

situation that God revealed the words, "Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged – and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them." When these words were revealed, Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, said, "I knew then that there would be fighting."[84]

If we should ask why the legitimization of struggle by force was delayed until this stage, we find the answer in the following considerations:

It is only fitting that armed struggle should be preceded by a reasoned explanation of Islam, with a call to embrace it, a presentation of the arguments in its favor, and attempts to solve any problems which might prevent its being properly understood. These are the initial stages of jihad, and it is the joint responsibility of all Muslims to participate in them.

It was an expression of God's mercy toward His servants that He did not enjoin upon them the duty of armed struggle until they had come to have an "abode of peace" to serve as a stronghold to which they could return for refuge and protection. The city of Medina was the first such place of refuge in Islam.

A General Word about Jihad and Its Legitimacy

Given that from this point onward, our study will lead us into a discussion of jihad and armed conflict, it is appropriate that we should pause briefly to present a sound understanding of jihad, its legitimacy, and the stages through which it has passed. This is especially important given that the subject of jihad has continued to be an open wound, as it were, at which Western opponents of Islam have aimed their blows in their attempts to mix truth with falsehood, thereby opening up breaches in the walls of the edifice of this noble religion, maligning it and causing others to doubt its validity.

It should come as no surprise that the opponents of Islam have limited their attention almost entirely to the issue of the legitimacy of jihad, since of all the foundations of Islam, this is the one which most alarms them! They realize that if an awareness of the importance of this teaching were reawakened in the hearts of Muslims and began to influence their daily lives, then no power, no matter how great, would be able to stand in the face of Islam's driving force. Consequently, any action which is intended to halt the Islamic tide must begin from this very point.

In the paragraphs which follow, we shall clarify, first, the meaning of jihad, its aim in Islam, the stages through which it passed in its development, and finally, the stage at which its development reached completion. Then we shall move on to a discussion of the misconceptions which surround the concept of jihad and the artificial, irrelevant distinctions which have been imposed upon it without justification.

The term 'jihad' refers to the exertion of effort for the sake of exalting the word of God and establishing an Islamic society, with armed struggle being one aspect of this effort. As for its aim, it is the establishment of an Islamic society and the formation of a sound Islamic state. With regard to the phases through which the concept of jihad has passed, we find that in the early days of Islam it was, as we have noted above, limited to a peaceful invitation to the worship of the one God and endurance of tribulations and hardships for the sake of the Islamic message. Soon after the Hejirah, the legitimacy of defensive warfare – that is, the repulsion of any force with similar force -- was established as well. Some time after this, divine permission was given to fight against anyone who stood in the way of the establishment of an Islamic society. In dealing with atheists, idol-worshippers or polytheists, nothing was to be accepted from them but submission to Islam, due to the impossibility of harmony between atheism or paganism and a sound Islamic society. As for the "people of the Book," that is, the Christians and the Jews, it was sufficient for them to live in accordance with the laws of the Islamic society and submit to the rule of the Islamic state, as well as pay a poll tax referred to as the jizyah instead of the zakah required of Muslims.

This last-mentioned stage of development represents the Islamic ruling on jihad which has remained valid until this day, and which remains incumbent on Muslims in all ages provided that they have the necessary power and arms. Concerning this stage, God Almighty says, "O you who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that God is with those who are pious" (Qur'an 9: 123). Similarly, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "I have been commanded to wage war on people until they say, 'There is no god but God.' Once they have said this, they have nothing to fear from me for their wealth or their lives; all they have to fear then is their reckoning with God."[85] Hence, it is meaningless in speaking of jihad to distinguish between defensive war and offensive war, for the aim of jihad is neither defense for its own sake nor offense for its own sake. Rather, its aim is to meet the need for

the establishment of an Islamic society with all of its associated systems and principles. Once this aim has been achieved, it makes no difference whether it came about by means of defense or offense.

As for legitimate defensive combat, such as a Muslim's defense of his wealth, his honor, his land, or his life, this is another type of warfare which has nothing to do with jihad as it is spoken of in Islamic jurisprudence. This type of combat is referred to as "qital al-sa'il," that is, warfare against an assailant, and scholars of jurisprudence devote a separate section to it in their writings. Nevertheless, untold numbers of writers confuse it with the jihad which we are discussing!

This, then, concludes our discussion of the meaning and purpose of jihad in Islamic law.

As for the fallacies and distortions which have been covertly introduced into the concept of jihad, they have been clothed in the garb of two theories which appear to be in conflict but which, on a deeper level, are in essential harmony. This harmony is based on the fact that, taken together, these two theories make up a single instrument whose purpose is to nullify the legitimacy of jihad. According to the first theory, Islam was spread solely by the sword, as it were, and the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions employed coercion such that the Islamic conquest which took place at their hands was based on subjugation and tyranny rather than on inward conviction and thought.[86] As for the second theory, it makes the very opposite claim, namely, that Islam is a religion of peace and love in which armed struggle would never be given legitimacy except for the repulsion of unannounced aggression, and whose followers would never go to war unless they were forced to do so because some other party had initiated hostilities.

Now, despite the fact that, as we have noted, the contents of these two theories are antithetical, the opponents of Islam have nevertheless sought to use both of them as means of achieving one and the same end. They have done so in the following manner. First, they promote the notion that Islam is a religion of tyranny and hatred toward non-Muslims, then they wait until this rumor had aroused the desired reactions among Muslims, who duly begin seeking means of refuting this unjust description of Islam. Then, while the Muslims are busy searching for the appropriate response to this misrepresentation, one of these same cynics concocts a defense of Islam – based, no doubt, on painstaking, unbiased research and inquiry! – saying, in effect: "Islam is not, as some have claimed, a religion of the sword; rather, quite to the contrary, it is a religion of peace and love which would never legislate armed struggle unless there were a need to repel unanticipated aggression, and its adherents would never be encouraged to consider war so long as there is a way to maintain peace."

Disturbed by the initial fabrication about Islam, simple-minded Muslims gave an enthusiastic applause to this "splendid" defense. Given their eagerness to respond to such an unjust claim concerning their religion, they readily accept this "defense" as valid and begin bringing forth one piece of evidence after another to demonstrate that Islam is, indeed, a peaceable, conciliatory religion which has no reason to interfere in others' affairs unless they assault it on its own turf, rousing its from its tranquil repose.

What these simple-minded people fail to realize is that this is exactly the result being sought both by those who circulated the initial rumor, and those who promoted the falsehood which was later put forward as a "defense" of Islam. The aim which both these groups seek to achieve by means of various carefully studied premises and tactics is to erase the notion of jihad from the minds of all Muslims, thereby putting to death any ambitions which they might cherish in their hearts. Evidence for this may be found in the following passage from Professor Wahbah al-Zuhayli's book entitled Athar al-'Harb fi al-Fiqh al-Islami ("The Influences of War on Islamic Jurisprudence"), where he quotes a relevant statement by the well-known British Orientalist Anderson. We include the quotation in context as follows:

Westerners, and especially the British, fear the emergence of the notion of jihad among the Muslims, lest they be united in their thoughts and take a stand against their enemies, and it is for this reason that they seek to promote the belief that jihad has been abrogated. Truly did the Almighty God speak when,

concerning those who have no faith, He said, "But when a precise revelation mentioning war has been sent down, you see those in whose hearts is disease (i.e., hypocrisy) looking at you with a look of one overcome by death" (Qur'an 47: 20).

I met with the British Orientalist, Anderson, on the evening of Friday, June 3, 1960, and I asked him his opinion on this matter. His response was to advise me to say that based on the principle expressed in the adage, "Rulings change with the times," jihad is no longer required of Muslims. The reason, he said, was that he does not believe jihad to be consistent with the current state of international affairs, in the context of which Muslims have now become associated with international organizations and bound by international treaties. Moreover, he added, jihad is a means of forcing people to enter Islam, whereas people have become accustomed to the notion of liberty, and their sophisticated manner of thinking will prevent them from accepting an idea which is imposed upon them by force.[87]

With this, let us resume our discussion of the second pledge of al-'Aqabah. For some reason in the divine wisdom, news of this pledge and the agreement which had been reached between the Prophet (pbuh) and the Muslims of Medina reached the ears of the polytheists of Mecca. Perhaps this was part of the divine plan to prepare the way for the Prophet's emigration to Medina, since we find that when the Meccan polytheists learned of these developments, they stepped up their persecution of the Messenger of God (pbuh) and made a more concerted effort than ever before to put him to death. Be that as it may, the second pledge of al-'Aqabah helped to lay the groundwork for the Prophet's emigration to Medina.

The Permission Granted by the Messenger of God (pbuh) to His Companions to Emigrate to Medina

Based on an account attributed to ‘A’ishah, may God be pleased with her, Ibn Sa‘d tells us in al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá that:

When the seventy Muslims from Medina had departed (from al-‘Aqabah), the Messenger of God (pbuh) felt joy and relief, for God had granted him a means of resisting his enemies through well-equipped men of war with experience in combat. At the same time, there was an increase in the tribulations being suffered by the Muslims at the hands of the polytheists who, once they learned of the Muslims’ departure from Mecca to Medina, persecuted the Prophet’s Companions mercilessly, vilifying and tormenting them more than ever before.

When the Companions complained to the Messenger of God (pbuh) of their sufferings, requesting his permission to emigrate, he replied, “I have been informed of the place where you are to seek refuge, namely, Yathrib. Hence, whoever of you wishes to depart, let him go there.”

The people then began readying themselves for the journey, helping and consoling one another and leaving without letting this be known to anyone but themselves. The first of the Prophet’s Companions to reach Medina was Abu Salamah Ibn ‘Abd al-Asad. Abu Salamah was followed by ‘Amir Ibn Rabi‘ah together with his wife, Laylá Bint Abi Hishmah, who was the first woman traveling in a camel litter to reach Medina. These were then followed by others of the Companions, who came out in successive groups and stayed in the homes of the Ansar, who gave them shelter, support, and encouragement.[88]

None of the Prophet’s Companions emigrated openly except for ‘Umar Ibn al-Khahhab, may God be pleased with him. We are told by ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him, that:

When he (‘Umar) had decided to emigrate, he grid himself with his sword, slung his bow over his shoulder, took some arrows in his hand and held his stick. He headed for the Ka‘bah as a large gathering of Qurayshites looked on from the Ka‘bah courtyard, then performed seven circumambulations, full of self-confidence and serenity. When he reached the station of Abraham, he prayed, then rose and said, “May God bring ignominy and shame upon those who look on! Whoever of you wishes to bereave his mother, orphan his children, or widow his wife, let him come to meet me on the other side of this ravine.”

The only people who followed him were a group of oppressed and miserable folks, whom he instructed out of the guidance he had himself received; then he continued on his way.[89]

Thus it was that the Muslims continued emigrating to Medina until the only ones left in Mecca were the Messenger of God (pbuh), Abu Bakr, ‘Ali, and those who were either being imprisoned and tortured for their faith, or were too weak or ill to travel.

Lessons and Principles

The trial which the Muslims underwent in Mecca was one of persecution, torture, contempt and ridicule at the hands of the polytheists. Then, once the Messenger of God (pbuh) had given them permission to

emigrate, their suffering took the form of leaving behind their country, their money, their possessions, and their homes.

However, the believers proved themselves to be loyal to their religion and their Sustainer in both these ordeals, enduring the difficulties and hardships with patience and unflagging determination. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) gave them instructions to emigrate to Medina, they left behind their homeland and everything they possessed; this was inevitable given the fact that they left furtively, which they could only do by ridding themselves of everything that might weigh them down. Hence, they left all such things in Mecca in order that their faith might be pure and sound, replacing whatever they had given up in Mecca with the brethren who awaited them in Medina and who stood ready to provide them with shelter, protection, and support.

This, then, is the model of the true Muslim, whose faith in God is so sincere that he is willing to give up homeland, wealth, or property in order that his faith might remain pure and untainted. As for the people of Medina who took the Meccan believers into their homes, encouraging and assisting them in any way they needed, they provide a true model of brotherhood among Muslims and of love in God. As you are no doubt aware, the bonds of brotherhood whose foundation is a common faith are more powerful than those based on family ties alone. It is for this reason that in the early days of Islam, inheritance came to be based solely on such religious bonds. The precept granting inheritance based on family ties was not legislated until after Islam was firmly established in Medina, at which time the Muslims had come to have a solid, well-fortified "abode of peace."

God Almighty says, "Verily, those who believed, and emigrated and strove hard and fought with their property and their lives in the cause of God as well as those who gave (them) asylum and help, these are (all) allies to one another, and as to those who believed but did not emigrate, you owe no duty of protection to them until they emigrate" (Qur'an 8: 72).

There are two principles which may be derived from the legitimacy of this emigration. The first principle is the duty incumbent upon all Muslims to emigrate from "the abode of war" to the "abode of peace" (literally, "the abode of Islam").[90] Al-Qurhubi quotes Ibn al-'Arabi as saying,

This migration was a duty of Muslims during the days of the Prophet (pbuh), and would have remained so until the Day of Judgment had it not been rendered unnecessary by the Islamic conquest (of Mecca). The intent of such a migration is to betake oneself to the Prophet (pbuh), and if one fails to do so, he has been disobedient.[91]

The "abode of war" is, by extension, any place in which it is not possible for a Muslim to perform his religiously prescribed duties, such as prayer, fasting, meeting for communal worship, issuing the public call to prayer, and any other outward rites associated with Islam.

Evidence for this understanding may be found in the following Qur'anic verse, in which God Almighty states, "Verily! As for those whom the angels take (in death) while they are wronging themselves, (the angels) will ask (them): 'In what (condition) were you?' They reply: 'We were weak and oppressed on earth.' They (angels) say: 'Was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?' Such men will find their abode in Hell - What an evil destination! Except the weak ones among men, women and children who cannot devise a plan, nor are they able to direct their way" (Qur'an 4: 97-98).

The second principle is the duty of all Muslims to come to one another's aid, no matter how distant their homelands or places of residence are from one another, so long as it is possible to do so. Islamic scholars and imams are in agreement that if Muslims are capable of rescuing fellow Muslims who are weak, imprisoned, or oppressed, wherever they happen to be, but fail to do so, they have committed a grave iniquity. Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi states, "If there are Muslims who are being oppressed or held captive, then other Muslims bear the burden of protecting them and extending material aid to them. So long as our

numbers permit us to do so, we should not rest until we have gone out to their rescue; and we should be prepared to spend our last cent, as it were, toward the achievement of this end."[92]

Moreover, just as it is Muslims' duty to extend friendship, assistance, and support to fellow Muslims, it is likewise their duty to keep such friendship, assistance, and support strictly amongst themselves. In other words, no sort of protection, mutual assistance, or fraternization is permitted between Muslims and unbelievers. This is clearly stated by God Almighty, who says, "And those who disbelieve are allies of one another. If you do not do so (i.e., ally yourselves with other believers), there will be disbelief and oppression on earth and great corruption" (Qur'an 8: 73).[93]

Ibn al-'Arabi states, "God has severed (pacts of) protection between the Muslims and those bent on denying the truth. Instead, He has made the believers one another's allies and, similarly, He has made those bent on denying the truth allies of one another, with the members of each group extending mutual assistance to each other based on their particular religion and belief."[94] There is no doubt that the application of such divinely revealed teachings has been the basis for the Muslims' strength over the ages while, conversely, their neglect of such principles and their adoption of practices which violate them has been the cause for their present weakness and lack of unity and their enemies' banding together against them so successfully from all directions.

The Hegira
(The Prophet's Emigration to Medina)

We read in the books of sound hadiths and the narratives passed down by the scholars of the prophetic biography that when Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, found that most of the other Muslims had emigrated to Medina, he came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and requested permission to emigrate himself. The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, saying, "There is no need for haste, as I, too, hope that permission will be granted to me."

"Do you also wish to emigrate, then?"

"Yes," he (pbuh) replied.

Hence, devoting himself entirely to preparations to accompany the Messenger of God (pbuh), Abu Bakr foddered two female riding camels of his, and for four months, provided them with special care.[95]

Meanwhile, the men of Quraysh noticed that the Prophet's fame had spread among other tribes and that he now enjoyed support outside Mecca; consequently, they became wary of the possibility that he (pbuh) might go out to these other tribes, fearing that he may have concluded agreements with them to go to war against Quraysh. Meeting to discuss the matter in the home of Qusayy Ibn Kilab (which served as the Qurayshites' official gathering place, where all matters of importance were decided), they consulted together concerning what to do with the Messenger of God (pbuh). They agreed at last to take a strong young man from each of the subtribes of Quraysh and give him a sharp sword; they would then instruct them to strike the Prophet (pbuh) together, killing him as one man; in this way, there would be so many tribes responsible for his death, the men of 'Abd Manaf would not be able to wage war on all of them at once. Having decided on this plan, they agreed upon a certain day on which they would carry it out. Before they could do so, however, the Angel Gabriel, peace be upon him, came to the Prophet (pbuh) and commanded him to emigrate, forbidding him to sleep in his own bed that night.[96]

Al-Bukhari relates the following hadith on the authority of 'A'ishah:

One day as we were sitting in Abu Bakr's house -- it was around noon, and very hot – someone said to him, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) is here, wearing a veil over his face, though he is not accustomed to visiting us at this time of day."

"May my mother and father be his ransom!" replied Abu Bakr. "He would not have come at this hour unless there were something urgent."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then approached and asked for permission to enter. When he came in, he (pbuh) said to Abu Bakr, "Send everyone out."

"But they are your family, O beloved Messenger of God (pbuh)," Abu Bakr replied.

He (pbuh) said, "I have been given permission to leave."

"Then, I pray you, O Messenger of God, take one of my two riding camels."

"Only if I pay you for it."

So we prepared the two of them for the journey as fast as we could, and put provisions for them in a traveling bag. Then Asma' Bint Abi Bakr cut a piece out of her sash and tied it around the mouth of the traveling bag, and for this reason she was known as, "the one with the sash."[97]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then went to see 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, instructing him to remain in Mecca for some time in order to return to people the various things which they had deposited with him (pbuh); since he was known by everyone in Mecca for his honesty and trustworthiness, it happened that whenever anyone had some possession which he wished to keep safe, he would deposit it with the Messenger of God (pbuh).

Meanwhile, Abu Bakr instructed his son 'Abdullah to listen during the day to what people were saying about the two of them, then come to them by night and report on what he had heard. He then ordered his servant, 'Amir Ibn Fuhayrah to pasture his sheep and goats by day, then let them rest in the evening near the Thawr Cave where the two men were staying so that they could drink their milk, and he told his daughter, Asma', to bring whatever food they might need each evening.

Ibn Ishaq and Imam Ahmad relate on the authority of Yahyá Ibn 'Abbad Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn al-Zubayr, who heard the account from Asma' Bint Abi Bakr, that:

When Abu Bakr and the Messenger of God (pbuh) went out together, Abu Bakr took all of his money with him, that is, five or six thousand dirhams.

My grandfather, Abu Quhafah, who had lost his sight, came in and said, "It seems that Abu Bakr has bereaved you of both himself and his wealth."

"No, Grandfather," I said, "he has left us a great deal."

Then I took some stones and placed them in a small window in the house where my father used to keep his money. I covered the stones with a robe, then took my grandfather's hand and led him to the window, saying, "Here, Grandfather, put your hand on this money."

So he placed his hand there and said, "Alright, then. If he has left all this for you, then he has done well. This will suffice you."

The fact is that he had not left us anything, but I did this as a way of keeping him quiet.[98]

After dark on the night on which the Messenger of God (pbuh) emigrated, the polytheists gathered at his door, waiting for an opportunity to kill him. However, God caused a deep sleep to come over them and, after leaving 'Ali lying in his bed and assuring him that no harm would come to him, he (pbuh) passed safely through their midst. The Messenger of God (pbuh) then set out with his companion, Abu Bakr, to the Thawr Cave, where they stayed for three days. The date of their departure was, in all probability, the 2nd of Rabi' al-Awwal, or September 20, 622 AD, thirteen years after the beginning of the Prophet's mission. Abu Bakr entered the cave first so as to check for beasts of prey, snakes, or anything else which might bring harm to the Prophet (pbuh). They stayed in the cave for three days, during which time Abu Bakr's son, 'Abdullah, would spend the night with them and bring them news from Mecca, then set out in the pre-dawn hours so as to be back among the Qurayshites in Mecca by morning. 'Amir Ibn Fuhayrah herded a flock of sheep and goats to the cave in the evenings; then, when 'Abdullah took his leave, 'Amir would follow him with the sheep and goats so as to cover his tracks.

Once the polytheists had learned of the Prophet's departure, they set off as well, spreading out in the area between Mecca and Medina and searching for him (pbuh) in all the places where they suspected he might have gone. At last they reached the Cave of Thawr, and when the Prophet (pbuh) and his companion heard their footsteps all around them, Abu Bakr whispered to him (pbuh) in terror, "If one of them looked under his feet, he would see us!"

"O Abu Bakr," he (pbuh) replied, "What do you think could befall two people the third of whom is God?"[99]

Hence, God blinded the polytheists, preventing any of them from glancing in the direction of the cave. In fact, it didn't even occur to any of them to wonder what was inside it!

Once the search for them had been discontinued, they came out to meet 'Abdullah Ibn Arqah - a polytheist whom, once they were assured of his truthworthiness, they had hired to guide them to the hidden pathways leading to Medina, and with whom they had agreed to meet at the cave later with their two riding camels. So, with 'Abdullah Ibn Arqah as their guide, they proceeded on their way, following the paths along the coast. Meanwhile, the polytheists of Mecca had promised that anyone who brought them the Messenger of God (pbuh) and Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, would be paid the equivalent of the two men's blood money.

One day, as a group of men of the tribe of Mudlij were holding a council meeting, they were approached by a man who said to them, "I just saw a dark patch along the coast, and I think it was Muhammad and his companions."

One of the men attending the council meeting, by the name of Suraqah Ibn Ju'shum, was sure that the speaker was right. However, wanting to discourage anyone else from going out to investigate the matter, he said, "Oh, the people you saw were so-and-so and so-and-so, who went out with some of their scouts to look for something."

Suraqah stayed at the council meeting for another hour, then rose, mounted his horse, and set off. As he approached the Messenger of God (pbuh), his horse stumbled and he fell off. He got back on his horse and approached once more. As he came near the second time, he could hear the Messenger of God (pbuh) reciting the Qur'an. The Prophet (pbuh) took no notice of him; however, Abu Bakr was keeping a vigilant eye on everything around them.

As Suraqah approached this time, his horse's feet began sinking into the ground until it was up to its knees. After falling off again, he reprimanded the animal until it got back up. But no sooner had the horse pulled its front feet out of the mud than a cloud of dust was stirred up in front of the two men he was seeking, then it rose skyward like smoke. When this happened, Suraqah knew for certain that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was inaccessible to him, and he was overcome with terror.

Suraqah called out to the two men, assuring them that he had come in peace, while the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his companion stood still until he came up beside them. When Suraqah reached the Messenger of God (pbuh), he apologized for his actions and asked him (pbuh) to pray to God that he be forgiven. Then he offered them food and supplies, but they declined, saying, "We have no need of them. However, conceal the matter, and tell no one of our plans."

"Rest assured that you have been protected," he replied.

When Suraqah returned to Mecca, he said nothing to anyone which might reveal the whereabouts of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companion. And thus it was that he set out in the morning with the intent of slaying them, and returned in the evening determined to shelter them from all harm!

The Arrival in Quba'

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) arrived in Quba', he was received well by its people, and stayed for several days in the home of Kulthum Ibn Hidm. While he (pbuh) was still there, he was joined by 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, after he had returned the items which had been left in the Prophet's safe keeping. During this time also, the Prophet (pbuh) established the Quba' Mosque, which is described by God in the following words: "... Only a house of worship founded, from the very first day, on God-consciousness is worthy of your setting foot therein... " (Qur'an 9: 108).

He (pbuh) then proceeded on his way to Medina where, according to al-Mas'udi,[100] he arrived on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal. Once in Medina, the Ansar gathered about him (pbuh), every one of them grasping the reins of his camel and urging him (pbuh) to stay in his home. However, the Messenger of God (pbuh) replied to each one, saying, "Leave her be; she is under orders (to reach a particular destination)." And in fact, his she-camel kept walking through the city's streets and alleyways until it reached a mirbad[101] owned by two orphaned young men belonging to the al-Najjar tribe, and located in front of the home of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari.

When they came to the place, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "This is where we will stay, God willing," and Abu Ayyub came and escorted him (pbuh) to his home. Once they had arrived, some maidservants came out and, overjoyed that the Prophet (pbuh) would be their neighbor, they chanted:

Maidens from Bani al-Najjar are we,

Rejoicing to have Muhammad as our neighbor!

"Do you love me?" he (pbuh) asked them in reply.

"Yes, we do," they said.

"And God knows how my heart cherishes you as well!"

Brief Portrait of the Prophet's Stay

In the Home of Abu Ayyub

The following account, related originally by Abu Ayyub, may God be pleased with him, from the days the Messenger of God (pbuh) lived in his house, is narrated by Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn Ishaq, and Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal based on versions passed down through numerous distinct chains of narrators and with similar wording:

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) came to live in my house, he stayed downstairs, while Umm Ayyub and I stayed upstairs. So one day I said, "Dear Prophet of God (pbuh), I hate living above you, and your living beneath me! Why don't you move upstairs and let us move downstairs?"

"Abu Ayyub," he replied, "It is more comfortable for us and for those who come to visit us for us to live downstairs."

So the Messenger of God (pbuh) went on living downstairs while we lived upstairs. Then one day, a jar of ours with water in it broke. So, having nothing else with which to wipe up the water and fearing that some of it might drip down onto the Prophet (pbuh) and annoy him, we brought out a velvet garment and used it to soak up the water. Then, feeling concerned and anxious, I went down to see the Prophet (pbuh), imploring him to move upstairs until he finally agreed to do so.

We also used to prepare dinner for him (pbuh) and send it to his quarters. Then, when he sent back what was left over, Umm Ayyub and I used to note the place where he (pbuh) had dipped his hand into the food and eat from there, hoping to receive a blessing from it. One night, though, we sent him a dish that contained onions and garlic, and when he returned the food to us, there was no sign that he had dipped into it with his hand. Alarmed, I came to him (pbuh) and asked, "Beloved Messenger of God (pbuh), when you returned your supper this evening, I saw no sign of your having dipped your hand into the food, whereas on all other days when you have returned the leftover food, Umm Ayyub and I have eaten from the same place where you dipped into it with your hand in hopes of receiving a blessing".

He (pbuh) replied, "I smelled the odor of this shrub in the food, and I am a man who holds intimate communion.[102] But as for you, feel free to eat it."

So we did as he (pbuh) had directed us. But after that, we never put garlic or onions in his food again.[103]

Lessons and Principles

We have had occasion in a previous chapter to discuss the meaning of emigration in Islam. In commenting on the Muslims' emigration to Ethiopia, we noted that God Almighty has invested Islam and its associated teachings with such sanctity that their importance outweighs all else. Hence, neither land, homeland, wealth, nor fame has any value if the religion's doctrines and practices are under threat. Consequently, God has made it the duty of every Muslim to sacrifice all such things, if necessity requires it, for the sake of preserving Islam and its truths.

We also observed that based on the law of God manifest in the universe, it is the spiritual forces which take the form of sound doctrine and true religion which act to preserve material gains and powers. Hence, when a nation is rich in sound morals and holding fast to correct religion, then its worldly authority, represented by homeland, wealth, and prestige, will be all the more cohesive, resilient, and secure. Conversely, when a nation is lacking in sound morals and confused and lost with respect to its doctrines, its worldly power will be fragile and short-lived. As we have noted above, history itself bears eloquent witness to these facts.

It is for this reason that Almighty God has legislated the principle of sacrificing wealth and land for the sake of one's doctrine and religion if necessity requires; by so doing, Muslims are, in actual fact, guaranteeing themselves wealth, land, and life, even though at first glance, they may appear to have been stripped forever of all such blessings. As evidence of this fact, one has merely to ponder the emigration undertaken by the Messenger of God (pbuh) from Mecca to Medina, which appeared at first to be an abandonment and loss of his homeland, but was, in actual fact, a means of preserving and securing it. Many, indeed, are the situations in which an act of preserving and protecting something appears in the form of abandoning and turning away from it. Thanks to the religion whose edifice he had constructed and whose state he had established, the Prophet (pbuh) returned, powerful and invincible, to the homeland from which he had been forced to emigrate several years earlier; and when he (pbuh) did so, none of those who had once stalked him and lain in wait to slay him could harm him any longer.

Given these observations, let us return now to a consideration of the story of the Prophet's emigration, deriving from it those principles which are of importance to every Muslim The point which first attracts one's notice about the story of his (pbuh) emigration is his decision to keep back Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, to be his sole companion during this journey. Muslim scholars have concluded from this that the Prophet (pbuh) had an exceptional love for Abu Bakr and that, for this reason, Abu Bakr was the closest of his (pbuh) Companions and the one most worthy of the Caliphate following his (pbuh) death. This conclusion is supported by numerous other points as well, such as the Prophet's appointment of Abu Bakr to lead others in prayer when he (pbuh) was ill, and his insistence that no one but Abu Bakr should be allowed to pray in his (pbuh) stead. As we read in the following sound hadith, "If I were to take someone as my beloved friend, it would be Abu Bakr."[104]

Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, was worthy of the privileged position with which God honored him. He was the perfect exemplar of the faithful companion; indeed, he was ready to sacrifice his life and everything he possessed for the sake of the Messenger of God (pbuh). As we have seen, he insisted upon preceding the Messenger of God into the cave so that, were he to find beasts of prey, snakes or anything source of danger, he would be able to offer his own life as a ransom for that of the Prophet (pbuh). We have also seen how he marshalled all his resources, including his wealth, his son, his daughter, his servant boy, and his shepherd in the service of the Messenger of God (pbuh) on this long, difficult sojourn.

Surely, this same attitude should characterize every Muslim who has placed his faith in God and His Messenger (pbuh); it is for this reason that he (pbuh) states, "None of you truly believes until I have become dearer to him than his children, his parents, and all other human beings."[105]

Second: It might occur to some Muslims to compare the manner in which 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab emigrated with the way in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) did so. In other words, they might wonder: Why did 'Umar emigrate publicly, defying the polytheists without fear or cowardice, whereas the Messenger of God (pbuh) emigrated in secret, taking precautions to ensure his safety? Was 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab more fearless than the Prophet (pbuh)?!

The answer to this question is that the actions of 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab – or any Muslim other than the

Messenger of God -- are viewed as being merely personal acts from which no legislative argument can be derived. In the case of such individuals, they must choose the means and methods which they find must suitable based on how courageous they are and how strong their faith in God is. As for the Messenger of God (pbuh), however, he was a legislator, which means that all actions on his part related to the religion which he brought are considered to be a form of legislation for us. Hence, his Sunnah – the second source of all Islamic legislation – is composed of the sum total of his words, actions, personal qualities, and decisions. If he (pbuh) had done as 'Umar did, people would have thought it was their duty to do likewise, and that it is not permissible to take precautions to ensure one's safety or to be circumspect when afraid.

However, God Almighty – the Cause of all -- has based His law in this world on the principle of cause and effect. Consequently, the Messenger of God (pbuh) employed all the material means he could think of in order to accomplish the task at hand: He had 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib sleep in his bed and cover himself with his cloak; he asked one of the polytheists – after making certain of his trustworthiness – to guide him to the side roads which his enemies might not think of using in their search; then he lived under cover for three days in the cave. By means of these, as well as all of the other practical measures which he (pbuh) took to protect himself, he (pbuh) made clear that faith in God Almighty does not preclude the use of the material causes which God in His abundant wisdom has placed at our disposal.

However, he (pbuh) did not take such precautions out of fear for himself, or because he suspected that he might actually fall into the hands of the polytheists before he reached Medina. We find that as the polytheists were hovering about the cave in which he (pbuh) and his companion had taken refuge -- such that if one of them had so much as glanced at his feet, he would have seen the Messenger of God (pbuh) -- Abu Bakr's heart was gripped with fear, whereas the Prophet (pbuh) reassured him, saying, "O Abu Bakr, what do you think could befall two people, the third of whom is God?" He said this despite the fact that, having resorted to all the precautions we have had occasion to mention, he could be expected to feel some fear and apprehension in such a situation. All the precautions he (pbuh) took, then, were meant to serve a legislative function on our behalf; for once he had taken them, his heart resumed its repose in God Almighty, relying on the protection and success which only He can provide. In this manner, he (pbuh) made it clear to Muslims that in all the affairs of their lives, their dependence should be on God alone, but that such dependence on the Divine need not prevent them from demonstrating respect for the causes which God has made to operate in this universe.

One of the most striking proofs in support of what we are saying is the state of mind in which Suraqah found the Prophet (pbuh) when he came out in pursuit of him, intending to put him to death. As Suraqah approached, one would expect that, after having taken such painstaking measures to protect himself, the Messenger of God (pbuh) would feel fearful of this enemy who had trailed him with such fervor. However, he felt nothing of the sort; instead, he was engrossed in his recitation of the Qur'an and his intimate converse with his Lord, since he knew that the God who had commanded him to emigrate would, as He had made clear in His Manifest Book, protect him from any evil which others might seek to perpetrate against him (pbuh).

Third: 'Ali's staying behind in Mecca following the Prophet's departure in order to return to people the belongings which they had left in his (pbuh) safekeeping bears eloquent witness to the extraordinary contradiction into which the polytheists had fallen. For even though they had disbelieved him (pbuh) and accused him of being a sorcerer and a fraud, they could find no one more trustworthy or honest than he, as evidenced by the fact that when they had possessions they wished to keep safe, they refused to leave them with anyone but him (pbuh)! And this, in turn, serves as proof that their disbelief in his message was not because they doubted his truthfulness; rather, it was due to their arrogance and their proud resistance to the truth which he had brought, and their fear that, were they to follow him, they would lose their

positions of leadership and control.

Fourth: If we ponder the effort exerted by 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Bakr, may God be pleased with him, traveling back and forth between the cave and Mecca, gathering news from Mecca and reporting it to his father and the Messenger of God (pbuh), as well as the concern and seriousness exhibited by his sister, Asma', may God be pleased with her, as she prepared the food, the riding animals, and the other provisions for the men's journey, we are presented with a vivid illustration of the ideal which ought to be pursued by young Muslims, both males and females, for the sake of serving God Almighty, applying the principles of Islam, and establishing an Islamic society. It will not suffice for Muslims to seclude themselves, devoting themselves to nothing but their private worship; rather, they must exhaust all of their resources and devote all of their energy to the cause of Islam. This is the hallmark of youth in the life of Islam in every age and generation.

Moreover, if you reflect for a moment on those who surrounded the Prophet (pbuh) during his mission and struggle on behalf of Islam, you will find that the vast majority of them were still in the early stages of their lives, and that they spared no effort or resources to ensure the victory of Islam and the establishment of its society.

Fifth: As for what happened to Suraqah as he sought to overtake the Prophet (pbuh), we must not fail to notice that this is a miracle, the report concerning which hadith scholars – including Muslim and al-Bukhari themselves -- agree to be accurate and reliable.

Sixth: One of the most notable miracles associated with the Prophet's emigration is the way in which he (pbuh) escaped unharmed from his house even when it was surrounded on all sides by the polytheists who were lying in wait to murder him. All of them were so overcome by drowsiness that when he (pbuh) came out, none of them was aware of it. And, as if to add the final, ironic blow to their plots against his life, their heads were covered with the dirt which the Messenger of God (pbuh) strewed over them as he emerged from among them reciting the words of God Almighty, "And We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, and We have covered them up so that they cannot see" (Qur'an 36: 9).

This miracle was, in effect, a declaration to polytheists and other nonbelievers in all ages and generations that the persecution and torment suffered at their hands by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his followers for the sake of their religion does not mean that God has abandoned them or that victory has slipped out of their grasp. On the contrary, the enemies of Islam should beware of rejoicing over the tribulations suffered by believers, since their God-given victory is near at hand.

Seventh: The manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) was received by the people of Medina is evidence of the tremendous love which filled the hearts of the Ansar, including men, women, and children alike. They used to go out every day to the outskirts of the city, awaiting his arrival under the blazing sun; then, as the day drew to a close, they would go home, only to return the following morning to continue their wait. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) reached them at last, they were so overjoyed to see him (pbuh) and to have him in their midst, they broke into loud, jubilant recitations of odes and songs of welcome. Not only so, but the Prophet (pbuh) reciprocated their affection. Looking at the handmaids of the tribe of al-Najjar as they chanted and sang in celebration of his arrival, he said, "Do you love me? God knows that I love you!"

Another lesson to which all of this points is that devotion to the Messenger of God (pbuh) consists in more than mere obedience to him; rather, the source and foundation of all such obedience is a fervent, heartfelt love for him (pbuh), apart from which there would be no inward motivation to obey him in action. Those who believe that love for the Messenger of God means nothing but obeying him and following his example are in error; such people fail to realize that in order to emulate someone, we must have some motive for doing so, and that apart from a heartfelt love that takes possession of one's emotions, such motivation will

be lacking. It is for this reason that the Messenger of God (pbuh) made the measure of one's faith in God the degree to which one's heart is filled with love for him (pbuh); such a love comes to take precedence over our devotion to our offspring, parents, and all other people on earth. And this, in turn, indicates that love for the Messenger of God (pbuh) and love for one's children and parents both spring from the same source, namely, the emotions and the heart; otherwise, it would be meaningless to compare them or judge one of them to be superior to the other.

Eighth: The glimpse we have been given of the time he (pbuh) spent living in the home of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari embodies another expression of the love which his Companions had for him. What concerns us here specifically is to note that Abu Ayyub and his wife sought a blessing by eating from the place where the Prophet (pbuh) had dipped his fingers into the food they had prepared for him (pbuh), since this demonstrates to us that seeking a blessing in this manner is a legitimate practice, approved by the Prophet (pbuh) himself.

Muslim and al-Bukhari provide us with numerous other examples of this practice, relating narratives in which the Companions sought blessing, healing, success, and the like through contact with various objects or materials derived from the Prophet's person. One such instance is related by al-Bukhari in his section on "Clothing" under the subheading, "On Gray Hair," where Umm Salamah, one of the Prophet's wives, used to keep hairs from his (pbuh) head in a bottle; then, if any of the Companions was afflicted by the "evil eye" or any other kind of harm, the afflicted person would send her a container of water. Umm Salamah would then soak the hairs in the water, and the person would drink the water as a means of obtaining healing and blessing.

In his section on "Virtues" under the subheading, "The Sweetness of His (pbuh) Perspiration," Muslim relates that the Prophet (pbuh) used to come to Umm Sulaym's house and sleep on her bed when she was not at home. One day after he (pbuh) had slept on her bed, Umm Sulaym came in and found that his (pbuh) perspiration had gathered on a piece of tanned leather on the bed. So, opening up a small chest in which she stored objects of value to her, she began to wring out the perspiration into some jars. When the Prophet (pbuh) woke up, he asked her, "What are you doing, Umm Sulaym?"

"O Messenger of God, we hope to bring blessings through it to our little boys."

"You are right to do so," he (pbuh) replied.[106]

Muslim and al-Bukhari include still other examples of this practice, such as the Companions' habit of vying for the chance to do their ablutions in the water which remained after the Prophet (pbuh) had performed his, and their seeking blessing from numerous other objects associated with his (pbuh) person, such as his clothing and the cup from which he used to drink.[107]

Hence, if this is true of seeking blessing from God through material objects associated with the Prophet (pbuh), then how much more must it apply to seeking the same through his distinctive rank with God Almighty, and how much more should we be encouraged to make supplications to our Lord based on his (pbuh) being "a mercy to the worlds"?

It would be a mistake to suppose that supplication to God and seeking blessing through the Prophet (pbuh) are two distinct practices. The fact is that the two terms being discussed, al-tabarruk (seeking blessing through the Prophet), and al-tawassul (bringing supplications to God) convey a single meaning, namely, requesting blessings and good fortune by way of some entity other than ourselves. Both the seeking of divine favor based on the Prophet's honored position with God, and seeking blessing through physical objects or substances associated with him (pbuh) are partial aspects of a more comprehensive sort of entreaty to God, the ruling concerning which may be found in the sound hadiths which have been passed down to us. Moreover, based on a process referred to by scholars of Islamic jurisprudence as tanqih al-

manah (the derivation of the basis for legal rulings and precepts), we find that those texts which allow entreaty to the Divine (al-tabarruk and al-tawassul) in general are inclusive of all partial, specific expressions thereof.

Contenting ourselves with these comments on the emigration of the Prophet (pbuh), let us move now to a discussion of the inspiring deeds which he (pbuh) began to perform in the new society which he founded in the city of Medina.

Section Four
Foundations of the New Community

The First Foundation:
Construction of the Mosque

The emigration of the Messenger of God (pbuh) from Mecca to Medina signaled the establishment of the world's first "abode of Islam"; this, in turn, heralded the appearance of the Islamic state under the supervision of its founder, Muhammad (pbuh). Hence, the first thing which the Prophet (pbuh) did was to lay the essential foundations for the Islamic state. These foundations were represented by the following three steps: (1) construction of the mosque; (2) affirmation of the fraternal bonds among Muslims in general, and among the Ansar, or Helpers, and the Muhajirin, or Emigrants (those who had emigrated from Mecca) in particular; (3) drawing up a written "constitution" which would define both the way of life which Muslims would adopt among themselves and the nature of their relations with others, most particularly, the Jews.

As has been mentioned above, the Prophet's she-camel kneeled in a place which belonged to two orphaned young men from among the Ansar. This same spot had been adopted by As'ad Ibn Zurarah as a place of prayer prior to the Messenger of God's emigration to Medina, and he regularly prayed there with his companions. After giving instructions that a mosque should be built there, the Messenger of God (pbuh) called for the two young men -- who were under the guardianship of As'ad Ibn Zurarah, may God be pleased with him – and offered to buy the land from them. "No," they replied, "we will give it to you as a gift, O Messenger of God." However, he (pbuh) insisted upon buying it from them for ten dinars.[108]

The land contained large boxthorn trees, palm trees, and old graves belonging to some polytheists. The Prophet (pbuh) issued instructions for the graves to be dug up and for the trees to be cut down and arranged in rows along the side of the mosque that faced the qiblah. The side of the mosque facing the qiblah - which was Jerusalem at that time – he made 100 cubits long, with the adjoining sides being of the same dimension or slightly less. They built the structure of unburnt bricks, with the Messenger of God (pbuh) building and moving stones alongside his companions. He (pbuh) made the pillars out of tree trunks and the roof of palm branches stripped of their leaves.

Someone asked him, "Shouldn't make it a (stronger) roof?"

He (pbuh) replied, "What we are doing is of such urgency, we don't have enough time to build an arbor like that of Moses, which was made from planks of wood and millet (a fragile, short plant)."[109] As for its floor, it was covered with sand and pebbles.

Al-Bukhari relates the following on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik:

The Prophet (pbuh) used to pray in the sheepfolds or wherever he happened to be when it was time to pray. When he (pbuh) ordered that the mosque be built, he sent for a group of men of the al-Najjar tribe.

"O men of al-Najjar, how much do you want for this plot of land?" he (pbuh) asked them.

"We want nothing for it but the reward we hope to receive from God," they replied.

The land contained the things I have mentioned to you: Graves of the polytheists, some dilapidated structures, and palm trees. The Messenger of God (pbuh) ordered that the graves be dug up, that the old

structures be razed, and that the palm trees be cut down. Hence, they arranged the cut trees in rows along the side of the mosque facing the qiblah. They made its door jambs of stone, and as they were hauling the rocks, they sang rhymes in the rajaz meter. Singing along with them, the Prophet (pbuh) chanted, "O God, there is no blessing but that of the afterlife, so grant victory to the Ansar and the Emigrants."[110]

The Prophet's mosque remained in this same form without any changes or additions until the end of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him. 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab, may God be pleased with him, introduced some improvements; however, he rebuilt it as it had been in the days of the Prophet (pbuh), of unburnt bricks and stripped palm branches, and he had its pillars rebuilt of wood. Then 'Uthman, may God be pleased with him, made major additions to it, building its wall out of engraved stones and gypsum.[111]

Principles and Proofs

The first principle: From the aforementioned facts, we may deduce a number of important principles. The first such principle is the importance of the mosque in Islamic society and the Islamic state. This is clear from the fact that, as soon as he had settled in Medina, the Prophet (pbuh) set about establishing a cohesive, firmly rooted Islamic community made up of those Muslims – the Ansar and the Muhajirin – who had been brought together there. And the first step he (pbuh) took toward this end was the construction of the mosque.

This, of course, comes as no surprise, since the construction of the mosque is the most fundamental underpinning of an Islamic community. Islamic society takes on the qualities of stability and cohesiveness only by its commitment to the Islamic way of life, doctrine, and morals, all of which spring from the spirit and inspiration of the mosque itself.

The Islamic way of life and morals include the spread of fraternal, loving ties among Muslims. However, the establishment and strengthening of such ties takes place only in the mosque; for unless Muslims meet together on a daily basis, indeed, several times each day, in one of these houses of God – with the resultant dissolution of those differences which exist among them due to prestige, wealth, and social status – they will not be bound together by the spirit of unity and brotherhood.

Similarly, the Islamic way of life includes the spread of the spirit of equality and justice among Muslims in the various spheres of their lives. However, this is only possible if they are meeting every day before God Almighty, standing on a single, common plain of servitude to Him with hearts that cling to and rely upon their one, majestic Sovereign. For if each Muslim retires to his own home to worship God without the experience of shared, communal worship, the meaning of justice and equality will not be able to gain the upper hand over the egoism, arrogance, and selfishness which are also present in the society.

Another characteristic of the Islamic way of life is that Muslims, disparate and scattered as they might be initially, are melted down, as it were, in a crucible of unshakable unity, having been brought together by the power of God embodied in His laws and precepts. However, if there are no places of worship where the Muslims can meet to be instructed in God's wisdom and law, their unity will eventually dissolve once again into detachment, and they will be divided from each other by lusts and desires.

Hence, in order to achieve all these values in the Muslim community and the new Islamic state, the Messenger of God (pbuh) undertook before anything else to build the mosque.

The second principle which follows from the events related in this hadith has to do with the manner of dealing with orphans and other young people who have not yet come of age. Some scholars of jurisprudence – specifically, those of the Hanifi school – have concluded from this hadith that those who have not yet to come of age are capable of acting responsibly on their own behalf,[112] since the Prophet

(pbuh) purchased the mirbad from the two orphan boys after bargaining with them over its price. If they were not to be considered capable of responsible action, he (pbuh) would not made such a purchase from them.

However, those who hold that minors are not to be considered capable of such action on their own behalf – this being the view of the majority of Islamic jurisprudents – base their position on the words of God Almighty, "And do not approach the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he reaches maturity" (Qur'an 6: 152). As for the hadith concerning the Prophet's purchase of the mirbad, it may be understand in light of the following two points: (1) According to the account related by Ibn 'Uyyaynah, the Prophet (pbuh) spoke concerning the purchase with the two boys' uncle, in whose care and under whose guardianship they still were at that time, and bought it from them through him.[113] Hence, this hadith provides no basis for the conclusion drawn by the Hanifis. (2) The Prophet (pbuh) possessed the authority of a legal guardian in such matters; hence, in purchasing the land from the two boys, he (pbuh) did so in his capacity as legal guardian over all Muslims, not simply as one Muslim among others.

The third principle to be derived from this hadith is the permissibility of digging up graves which are so old that they have been obliterated from sight, and of building a mosque on the same site provided that the soil has been made suitable for this purpose. Commenting on this hadith, Imam al-Nawawi states, "This hadith allows for the digging up of graves which are no longer visible such that, if the soil which has been mixed with decayed matter and blood is removed, it is permissible to pray in the same spot and even to build a mosque there.

This hadith also indicates that land in which the dead have been buried and whose remains are no longer visible may be sold, and that it remains the property of its original owner and his heirs following his death so long as it has not been bequeathed as a religious endowment, or waqf.[114] According to scholars of the prophetic biography, the graves which were found in the mirbad were old and their markers had been obliterated; hence, there would no longer have been any decaying matter or blood on the site; nevertheless, they were dug up and all remains found inside were removed. As we have mentioned, it is only permissible to dig up graves whose markers have been obliterated and turn the site into a mosque if the land has not been designated as a religious endowment; if it has been, then it may not be employed for any purpose other than that for which it was initially set aside.

The fourth ruling to be derived from this hadith has to do with the construction and embellishment of mosques. Construction pertains to the use of stone or other materials in the mosque edifice in such a way as to reinforce some aspect of its structure, while inscriptions and embellishments go beyond this to include various and sundry types of ornamentation.

As for construction, it is permitted and even viewed as praiseworthy by the majority of Islamic scholars, with support for this position being found in the fact that 'Umar and 'Uthman, may God be pleased with them, both engaged in the rebuilding of the Prophet's mosque to one degree or another. For although the Prophet (pbuh) himself did not undertake such an action, this does not serve as evidence that he would have forbidden it. For the building and reinforcement of mosques entails no violation of the wise purpose for which the building of mosques was initially instituted. Rather, it is an expression of care and concern for the rites of worship instituted by God Almighty. Islamic scholars find further evidence in support of this view in God's words, "The mosques of God are only to be visited or tended by those who believe in God and the Last Day" (Qur'an 9: 18), where the word rendered "tend" ('imarah) includes the meanings of constructing, reinforcing, and maintaining.

As for inscription and embellishment, they are disapproved of by the majority of Islamic scholars, some of whom utterly forbid such practices, while others merely view them as undesirable. However, both those who forbid them entirely and those who merely judge them to be undesirable agree that money which has been set aside for tending mosques may not be used for any sort of inscription or embellishment. If,

however, the money used for such a purpose belongs to the person who built the mosque, then no objection may be made to it. Al-Zarkashi quotes Imam al-Baghawi as stating that it is not permissible to make inscriptions on a mosque with the proceeds of a waqf, and that a fine is to be imposed on whoever does so. Moreover, if someone does so with his own money, it is still undesirable, because in so doing, he causes distraction for those praying in the mosque.[115]

Hence, there is a clear distinction between the general notion of construction and reinforcement on one hand, and the introduction of inscriptions and embellishments on the other. The former, as we have mentioned, involves nothing which would conflict with the wise purpose for the sake of which the building of the mosque was legislated in the first place. The latter, by contrast, has the potential of distracting those who have come to pray, since it may make it more difficult for them to adopt the desired attitude of reverence and contemplation and preoccupy their minds with worldly appearances, whereas the purpose for coming to the mosque is to flee from mundane thoughts and empty one's mind of this world's adornments and temptations. This is the substance of the warning voiced by 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, when – as al-Bukhari relates – he gave instructions for the construction of a mosque, saying, "Shelter people from the rain, but beware of seeking to dazzle them with brilliant reds and yellows, thereby subjecting them to temptation."

As for the practice of writing a verse from the Holy Qur'an on the wall of the mosque which faces the qiblah, there is disagreement among scholars as to whether this is included in the type of inscription which is proscribed in Islam. Al-Zarkashi states in his book, I'lam al-Sajid, "It is undesirable to write a verse from the Holy Qur'an, or even a part thereof, in the mosque's qiblah. However, this practice is allowed by some scholars of Islam, including Malik, who stated, 'It is acceptable in light of the fact that 'Uthman did so in the Messenger of God's mosque, and was not censured for so doing.'"[116]

From the foregoing one can plainly discern the error being committed by many who are interested in building mosques today. They expend great efforts to adorn their mosques in the most varied, artistic manner possible, imbuing them with an air of pomp and extravagance. As a result, however, those who enter them hardly experience any sense of their dependence upon the majestic God or their need to worship and serve Him; rather, the only thing such edifices communicate to them is a sense of pride in the advances that have been made by architecture and the art of Arabic ornamentation!

One of the most unfortunate results of this satanic manipulation of simple-minded Muslims is that the poor no longer have any place in which to take refuge from worldly enticements. Mosques used to possess a quality which provided solace to the poor; they gave such people strength to persevere in spite of hardships, ushering them out of the realm of the present world with its ostentation and into another realm which embodied the life to come with all its abundance and virtue. However, the appearance of modern-day mosques merely serves to remind them of the worldly indulgences of which they have been deprived and of the misery of their indigence.

Serious, indeed, O God, is the error into which Muslims have fallen by abandoning the truths of Islam and preoccupying themselves with false appearances which, though they may seem to derive from their religion, have their true source in worldly desires and inclinations!

The Second Foundation:
Brotherhood Among Muslims

In addition to his building of the mosque, the Messenger of God (pbuh) established brotherly ties among the Emigrants and the Helpers. These ties were to be based on truth, mutual support and assistance, and the understanding that those who died would bequeath their wealth and possessions to their fellow Muslims, such that the influence of their Islamic brotherhood would be more powerful in such matters than family ties.

Hence, he (pbuh) made brothers of such pairs as Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib and Mu'adh Ibn Jabal, Hamzah Ibn 'Abd al-Muhhalib and Zayd Ibn Harithah, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him, and Kharijah Ibn Zuhayr, 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab and 'Utban Ibn Malik, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn 'Awf and Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi', and others.[117] Having done this, the Prophet (pbuh) then reinforced these fraternal bonds among the Companions within a framework of camaraderie and mutual support, as we shall see below.

This brotherly fellowship was based also on material foundations, including the ruling that inheritance among them should be based on the ties of their common Islamic faith rather than on kinship. The rights associated with their common faith continued to be given precedence over those deriving from kinship until the Battle of Badr, following which God ruled anew, saying, "But those of (blood) relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in the decree of God. Indeed, God is the All-knower of everything" (Qur'an 8: 75). This Qur'anic verse abrogated the practice which they had adopted heretofore, causing family ties to become, once again, that which determined inheritance rights among Muslims. Each individual was hereby called back to a concern for family origin and the loyalty required by blood ties, and all Muslims became brethren.

Al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that, "When the Emigrants came to Medina, they possessed more right to inherit from the Helpers than the Helpers' own relatives due to the fraternal ties which the Prophet (pbuh) had established among them. However, when the following verse was revealed – 'And to everyone We have appointed heirs of that (property) left by parents and relatives' (Qur'an 4: 33) -- this practice was abolished. As for the Qur'anic phrase in the same verse rendered, 'To those also with whom you have made a pledge,' this includes those to whom a commitment has been made to provide support, material assistance, and counsel; however, it does not include a commitment to bequeath an inheritance."[118]

Lessons and Proofs

This, then, is the second foundation laid down by the Prophet (pbuh) toward the establishment of the Islamic community and the Islamic state. The importance of this foundation may be seen in the following points. First: No state can come into existence and endure without a foundation of unity and solidarity; nor can unity and solidarity come about without a spirit of genuine brotherhood and mutual affection and concern among the people concerned. Without genuine fraternity and shared love, no nation or group of people can be unified around a mere principle, and without such unity, no state can come into existence.

However, brotherhood must itself be preceded by a doctrine in which there is a shared faith. A spirit of

fraternity between two people each of whom believes in an idea or doctrine which conflicts with the beliefs of his partner is a mere illusion, especially if such a notion or doctrine is one which requires that the one who adheres to it adopt a certain type of conduct in his day-to-day affairs.

Consequently, the Messenger of God (pbuh) insisted that the foundation of the fraternal fellowship in which he had joined the hearts of his Companions be the doctrine of Islam which he had brought from God Almighty. This doctrine places all people on an equal footing before God as his devoted servants, recognizing no distinction among them except on the basis of the degree of piety to which they attain and the righteous works which they perform. After all, one cannot expect a spirit of brotherhood, cooperation and altruism to prevail among people who have been alienated from one another by disparate ways of thinking, and each of whom is ruled by his own ego, selfishness, and personal whims.

Secondly: The entity which we term a "society" is distinguished from a mere scattered, disjointed collection of individuals by one thing, namely, the principle of cooperation and mutual support among its members in all spheres of life. If this cooperation and mutual support are based on justice and equality, then the society is a sound, equitable one. If, on the other hand, they are based on injustice and prejudice, then the society itself will be unjust and errant.

If, then, a healthy society is based upon a foundation of justice and equality in the distribution of fundamental resources and means of subsistence, then what is to ensure that this justice will be untainted, and that it will be carried out in the best possible manner? The most natural guarantor of such an achievement is fraternity and solidarity, followed by additional guarantees pertaining to the governing authority and the law. For no matter how much a given government wishes to fulfill the principles of justice among individuals, it will not achieve this aim unless these principles are upheld by a spirit of brotherhood and love among the members of the society concerned. In fact, without this spirit, such principles become nothing more than a source of resentment and hatred, which in turn have the potential of leading to the worst possible forms of oppression and injustice.

This being the case, the Messenger of God (pbuh) took the brotherhood which he had established among the Emigrants and the Helpers and made it the foundation for the principles of social justice whose application made possible the greatest, most magnificent social system the world has ever known. These principles were gradually developed into binding Islamic precepts and laws; nevertheless, they all rested upon this same initial "grounding," namely, the Islamic fraternity, which was grounded in turn upon Islamic doctrine, and without which these principles would have had no practical, positive effect toward strengthening and supporting the Islamic community.

Thirdly: The byword of brotherhood was associated with an eminently practical meaning. In other words, the principle of brotherhood which the Prophet (pbuh) instilled in the hearts and minds of his Companions was not a mere slogan or a set of words which he (pbuh) had them utter with their lips. Rather, it was a concrete reality connected with the circumstances of their daily lives, and with all aspects of the relations which now existed between the Emigrants and the Helpers.

The Prophet (pbuh) caused this brotherhood to be a genuine responsibility to be shared in common by the brothers, and this responsibility was carried out among them to the fullest. As evidence of this, we have merely to reflect on what was done by Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi', whom the Prophet (pbuh) had joined in friendship with 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn 'Awf. Sa'd offered to share his home, his family, and his wealth equally with 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn 'Awf. However, 'Abd al-Rahman thanked him and asked him simply to direct him to the city market so that he could find gainful employment there. Nor was Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi' unique among the Helpers in the offer he made to his brother; on the contrary, this type of generosity was typical among the Companions in their manner of relating to one another, especially following the Hejira and after the Prophet (pbuh) established formal ties of fraternity among them.

Similarly, God Almighty made inheritance rights dependent upon such bonds of brotherhood, without

regard to whether the heir was related by blood to the deceased. The wisdom behind this legislation lies in the fact that in this manner, the Muslims gained a more vivid awareness of the Islamic brotherhood as a concrete reality; they came to understand that the fraternity and mutual love among Muslims is not a mere slogan or words to be uttered but that, instead, it is an actuality with palpable social consequences which make up the most important preconditions for the establishment of a just social system.

As for the wisdom behind the subsequent abolition of the practice of granting inheritance rights based on this brotherhood, it lay in the fact that the system of inheritance which was established on a permanent basis was, itself, based on the Islamic fraternity which was now shared in common among those bequeathing and inheriting. (One consequence of this is that a Muslim may not inherit from anyone of another religion, nor is he or she allowed to bequeath anything to someone of a different religion.) However, during the period of time immediately subsequent to the Hegira, a special responsibility was laid upon the Helpers and the Emigrants to engage in cooperation, mutual support and aid due to the fact that the Emigrants had left their relatives, their homes, and their wealth in Mecca and come to live as guests with their brothers the Ansar in Medina. The ties of brotherhood which the Prophet (pbuh) had established among the Emigrants and the Helpers ensured the fulfillment of this responsibility, which required that these bonds of brotherhood be more powerful in their effects than mere family ties.

Once the Emigrants were settled in Medina and Islam had taken firm root there, the spirit of Islam became the lifeblood of the new community. As a consequence, the time had come to remove the mold into which relations between the Emigrants and the Helpers had been cast when they first met in Medina. Now that the community had been infused with the spirit of Islamic fraternity and the sense of responsibility which this spirit naturally engendered, there was no more cause to fear that it would suffer fragmentation or dissolution. Thus, there could be no harm in restoring family ties among Muslims to their former place of influence, since their influence now operated in concert with the kinship and brotherhood created by Islam.

Moreover, this brotherhood brought about by the Messenger of God (pbuh) between the Emigrants and the Helpers had been preceded by the brotherhood which had been formed among the Emigrants themselves while still in Mecca. As Ibn ‘Abd al-Birr states, “The fraternal association among the Muslims was brought into being twice: first among the Emigrants themselves, in Mecca, and again between the Emigrants and the Helpers.”[119] This confirms to us that the basis of this brotherhood remained none other than the bond of Islam and the unity of faith in its truths; however, this bond needed to be renewed and reaffirmed following the Hegira due to the new circumstances which faced the Muslims at that time, including the gathering of the Emigrants and the Helpers within a single household, as it were.

The Third Foundation:
The Drafting of a Covenant
between Muslims and Non-Muslims

This foundation is the most important one laid by the Prophet (pbuh) with respect to the constitutional value of the new state. We are told by Ibn Hisham that the Prophet (pbuh) had only been in Medina for a short time before most of the city's Arab inhabitants embraced Islam, with the result that virtually every household of the Helpers had entered Islam with the exception of a number of members of the Aws tribe. At this time, the Messenger of God (pbuh) established a written agreement between the Emigrants and the Helpers and concluded a peace treaty with the Jews which recognized their right to their religion and their wealth, granted them other specific rights, and stipulated certain conditions to which they would be required to conform.

This agreement is mentioned by both Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Khaythamah, although only the latter includes its chain of transmission, saying, "It was related by Ahmad Ibn Janab Abu al-Walid, on the authority of 'Isá Ibn Yunus, on the authority of Kathir Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr al-Muzni, who related on the authority of his father and his grandfather that the Messenger of God (pbuh) established a written agreement between the Emigrants and the Helpers.[120] Imam Ahmad also includes it in his Musnad, where he narrates it on the authority of Surayj, who said, "It was related by 'Abbad on the authority of Hajjaj on the authority of 'Amr Ibn Shu'ayb, who related on the authority of his father and his grandfather that the Prophet (pbuh) established a written agreement between the Emigrants and the Helpers... "[121]

We will not include the entire text of the agreement, which is quite lengthy. However, we have selected those articles which shed special light upon the constitutional significance of the Islamic community and its newly founded state in Medina. What follows is a list of these articles, presented in the order in which they appear in the original text:

One: The Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib (Medina), and those who have followed them and fought together with them, are a single nation.

Two: All of these Muslims, regardless of their tribes of origin, shall retain their prior rights and commitments with respect to the payment and exaction of blood money, and they shall ransom their prisoners of war in a manner which demonstrates a spirit of justice and equity among the believers.

Three: The believers will be certain to provide anyone among them who is burdened with debts and who has many dependents with the required ransom or blood money (which he is unable to pay).

Four: Those believers who hold God in awe shall stand opposed to anyone among them who commits an outrage or an injustice, or who seeks to obtain advantage for himself through wrongdoing, iniquity, aggression or corruption among the believers; they shall all stand opposed to such a person even if he is one of their own offspring.

Five: No believer shall slay another believer on behalf of an unbeliever, nor shall he support an unbeliever against a believer.

Six: The peace agreements at which believers arrive shall apply to all of them without exception; if

fighting takes place for the sake of God and His religion, no believer shall conclude peace with the enemy without all other believers being included on an equal, fair basis.

Seven: God's covenant of protection applies to all believers, from the least to the greatest, and the believers are, likewise, protectors and allies of one another.

Eight: It shall be unlawful for any believer who has acknowledged the validity of this agreement and who believes in God and the Last Day to support, protect, or provide lodging to a criminal; anyone who does so shall be under God's curse and suffer His wrath on the Day of Judgment, with nothing to mitigate his guilt.

Nine: Should the Jews go to war (on their own), they shall be responsible for their own expenses.

Ten: The Jews of the tribe of Bani 'Awf shall be considered a separate nation alongside that of the believers, with the Jews having their religion, and the Muslims theirs. Moreover, if anyone is guilty of some crime or injustice, only the offender and his family shall perish.

Eleven: The Jews shall be responsible for their own upkeep, and the Muslims for theirs. However, they shall be committed to supporting one another should anyone wage war on those who have entered into this agreement.

Twelve: Should the parties to this agreement encounter any conflict or disagreement as a consequence of which they fear that their unity will be threatened, the conflict shall be brought before God Almighty and Muhammad, the Messenger of God (pbuh).

Thirteen: Whoever leaves Medina and whoever stays therein shall be safe, except for those who have committed some crime or injustice.

Fourteen: God Almighty is the Source of all truth and righteousness contained in this agreement, and He is the protector of all who are righteous and fear Him.

Lessons and Proofs

This document offers important lessons related to a variety of organizational precepts which apply to the Islamic community, and which we summarize below:

One: In the context of modern nomenclature, the word "constitution" is the most fitting term one might employ to describe this document. Moreover, if it was, in effect, the drawing up of a constitution, then it was inclusive of everything which might be dealt with by any modern constitution which concerns itself with laying clear guidelines for the state with respect to both its internal and its external affairs, that is, as they pertain to relations among the members of the society governed by the state, and relations of the state with other governing entities.

This constitution which the Messenger of God (pbuh) laid down by inspiration from his Lord, and which he dictated to his Companions, he (pbuh) then made the agreed-upon basis for relations among the Muslims and between the Muslims and their Jewish neighbors. This provides clear evidence that from its earliest inception, the Islamic community was based upon comprehensive constitutional foundations, and that similarly, the Islamic state consisted, from the very start, of all the constitutional and administrative components which a state might require. These components form an essential foundation for the application of the rulings of Islamic law in society, since, as a whole, this law is based on the notion of the unity of the Islamic nation and on all organizational provisions with relevance thereto. There is no substructure upon which the rule of Islam and its relevant laws can be based unless the constitutional organization established by the Prophet (pbuh) is, at the same time, part of the legal rulings of Islam itself.

Such considerations belie the arguments put forth by those who allege that Islam is nothing but a religion between the individual and his Lord which has nothing to do with the components of a state or a

constitutional organization. Such claims are an old trick, one to which the opponents of Islam and the chattels of Western imperialism resort in the hope of circumscribing Islam lest it do its work in the various Islamic societies or gain sufficient power and influence to gain control over corrupt societies. After all, the only means to achieve this aim is to ensure that Islam is not a state, but a religion characterized by rites of worship rather than legislation and ordinances. Hence, although Islam is, in fact, both a religion and a state, it must be turned into an entity incapable of fulfilling the latter function, even if the only way to do so is through lies and distortions. However, unfortunately for such foes of Islam, this ruse has been foiled, and talk of it has come to be viewed as blatant, malicious nonsense.

Be that as it may, our analysis of these impressive provisions bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the birth of the Islamic community took place within the integrated framework of the state, and that the laws associated with this community were only revealed within the matrices of a social organization which was well coordinated on all levels and in all respects. Moreover, this fact remains regardless of the value of the legislative rulings themselves insofar as they were merely constituents which, when joined together, went to make up the integrated, organized foundation for an extraordinary constitutional and administration system.

Two: This document reveals the fairness with which the Prophet (pbuh) treated the Jews. This fair treatment could have born positive fruit in the relations between the Muslims and the Jews were it not for the fact that the Jews' Machiavellian, disloyal, deceitful nature got the better of them. Only a very short time had passed before they lost patience with the conditions laid down in this agreement and to which they had committed themselves; hence, they rose up against the Prophet (pbuh) and the Muslims through various sorts of treachery, the details of which we shall discuss below, God willing. This being the case, the Muslims were released from any commitment which they had made previously to the Jews.

Three: This document points to important rulings associated with Islamic law, of which we mention the following:

1- The first article of the agreement makes clear that it is Islam alone which creates Muslims' unity; it is Islam alone which makes them a single nation; and all disparities and distinctions among them vanish into nothingness within the framework of this all-encompassing unity. This may be seen clearly in the words of the Prophet (pbuh), "The Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib (Medina) and those who have followed them and fought together with them are a single nation." This is the first foundation which must be laid in establishing a sound, cohesive Islamic society.

2- The second and third articles show us that one of the most important characteristics of an Islamic society is the emergence of noble expressions of cooperation and solidarity among its members, all of whom are responsible for one another in concerns related both to this life and the next. The majority of the precepts of Islamic law rest upon the foundation of this very responsibility, defining the specific means by which the principles of cooperation and solidarity are to be applied among Muslims.

3- The seventh article is evidence of the degree of precision and completeness which characterizes the equality among Muslims, not merely as a catchy slogan to be mouthed for others to hear, but as an essential legal pillar in the edifice of the Islamic community. A striking example of the application of this principle of equality among Muslims may be found in the words of the Prophet (pbuh) when he said, "God's covenant of protection applies to all believers, from the least to the greatest." What this means is that wherever a Muslim goes, the covenant of protection to which he or she is party remains valid and is to be respected. When a Muslim takes someone into his or her protection, then no one, be he ruler or ruled, possesses the right to violate the sanctity of this commitment. Moreover, the Muslim woman is no different from the man in this respect; hence, it is agreed upon unanimously among Islamic scholars of all four theological schools that if a woman – whoever she happens to be -- should take someone into her protection, then the sanctity of this commitment may not be violated by anyone whatsoever, no matter how

lofty his status or influential his position. There are, however, certain stipulations mentioned by jurisprudents, for example, that such a covenant of protection must not pose danger to the Muslims, such as the act of protecting a spy; that it apply to a limited number of individuals; and that it be valid for a limited period of time, not to exceed four months.[122] Both Muslim and al-Bukhari, as well as others, relate that Umm Hani', the daughter of Abu Talib, went to the Messenger of God (pbuh) during the year in which the conquest of Mecca took place and said, "O Messenger of God, my brother 'Ali claims that he is going to kill a man whom I have taken under my protection, by the name of Ibn Hubayrah." To which he (pbuh) replied, "Whoever you have pledged yourself to protect, we will protect as well."

By reflecting on these things, you will realize the significance of the progress which women achieved under the protection of Islam; indeed, the woman obtained all of her human and social rights on an equal footing with the man, something the likes of which had never occurred before in the history of nations.

However, it is important to be aware of the difference between the splendid human equality which was established by the law of Islam, and the false imitations of it which are promoted by proponents of modern-day "urbanity". The former is a law of meticulously preserved equality based on the authentic inborn human nature, whose purpose is to achieve happiness for all people: men and women, individuals and communities. The latter, by contrast, is little more than a set of animal impulses which seek to make the woman into an object of amusement and pleasure for men to enjoy with unbridled freedom.

4- The twelfth article makes clear that the sole arbiter to which Muslims are to have recourse in all of their disputes and differences is God Almighty's righteous law and the rulings to which it gives rise. This law consists of the contents of the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger. If Muslims search for solutions to their problems anywhere else, they will be perpetrators of iniquity, exposing themselves to misery in this world and God's punishment in the hereafter.

These, then, are four principles contained in the document which the Messenger of God employed as the foundation of the Islamic state in Medina, and which he set forth as a guide for Muslims' behavior in their new community. In addition, of course, it contains other principles which will present themselves without difficulty to anyone who wishes to reflect further on it. Through the committed application of the contents of this document, the Islamic state came to rest on the sturdiest of foundations; then, powerful and firmly rooted, it spread to all parts of the globe, offering people the soundest, most high-minded civilization and culture humanity has ever witnessed.

Section Five
The Defensive War Phase

Pereliminary Remarks

The battles to be discussed in this section under the heading, "The Defensive War Phase" were, indeed, defensive, since each of them, as will be seen shortly, was a response to some intrigue or aggression which had been initiated by the polytheists. These battles do not reflect the final form which was taken by jihad in Islam; rather, they represent merely one of the phases witnessed by the Islamic mission in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). The final phase which, understood in light of the phases which preceded it, constitutes the definitive Islamic dictum in this regard, becomes manifest in the events which followed the Truce of Hudaybiyah. Al-Bukhari narrates that, upon departing from the battle fought against Banu Qurayéah, the Prophet (pbuh) made reference to this phase, saying, "From now on, we shall be the ones to make war on them, not they on us."

In what follows, we shall review the events of this phase of the early Islamic mission, restricting ourselves solely to those developments which relate to a relevant ruling, moral, or lesson.

The Beginning of the Fighting:
The Prophet's First Military Expedition

As we have already had occasion to mention, the most reliable hadiths and historical accounts indicate that fighting was granted legitimacy in the Islamic mission after the Hegira. In practical terms, this new phase began in the month of Safar, one year after the Prophet's emigration to Medina. It was at this stage that the Messenger of God (pbuh) went out for the first time with the intention of engaging in a military expedition. The expedition being referred to here is the Battle of Waddan, in which the Prophet (pbuh) went out with the intention of fighting Quraysh and the tribe of Banu Hamzah; however, he (pbuh) was spared the actual battle because Banu Hamzah made peace with him, and he (pbuh) and his Companions returned to Medina without any fighting having taken place.

The Great Battle of Badr

The reason for this battle was that after learning of the approach of a trade caravan from Syria being led by Abu Sufyan Ibn Harb, the Prophet (pbuh) called upon the Muslims to go out and take the caravan in return for the wealth they had been obliged to leave behind in Mecca. However, while some responded readily to the summons, others were slow to do so, since they did not expect any fighting to take place.

While on his way to Mecca, Abu Sufyan learned of the Muslims' intention to take the caravan, so he sent Damdam Ibn 'Amr al-Ghifari to Mecca to inform the Qurayshites of the matter and call them out to protect their wealth. When the Qurayshites received the news, they made ready with great haste and came out prepared for battle. All the men of Quraysh responded to the call, including the tribe's notables, bringing the number of men who went forth to nearly one thousand.

A few days into the month of Ramadan, the Prophet (pbuh) set out with his Companions; according to Ibn Ishaq, there were three hundred fourteen men with seventy camels among them. Hence, the men had to take turns riding, with groups of two or three mounting a single animal at one time. The Muslims knew nothing of the fact that the Qurayshites were coming out to meet them. Meanwhile, Abu Sufyan had taken measures to protect his caravan: Traveling toward Mecca along the coastal road with the well of Badr to his left, he proceeded with haste until he had rescued his caravan from danger.

When news of the Qurayshites' approach reached the Prophet (pbuh), he consulted with the Companions who were with him. The Emigrants, including a man by the name of Miqdad Ibn 'Amr, spoke encouraging words, saying, "O Messenger of God, go forth to accomplish what God has commanded you to do. We are with you!" However, the Prophet (pbuh) continued looking at the people with him, and said, "Advise me, men!" In reply, Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh said, "You seem truly to want our assurance, O Messenger of God!"

"Indeed, I do," he (pbuh) replied.

"We have believed you and placed our confidence in you," Sa'd said. "We have seen for ourselves that the message you bring is the truth, and for this reason, we have promised to follow and obey you with glad hearts. So go forward to carry out your intention, for we are with you. I swear by the One who has sent you in truth, if you were to spread out the sea before us and plunge into its waters, we would plunge in after you!"

Pleased with Sa'd's words, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "March on, then, and be of good cheer, for God has promised me victory over one of the two enemy parties. By God, at this very moment, I can see the places where our enemies will perish."

Then, with the help of spies sent out by the Prophet (pbuh) to bring back information about the Quraysh, the Muslims learned that the number of Qurayshite fighters was between nine hundred and one thousand, and that most of the tribe's leaders had come out with them.

Having now ensured the caravan's safety, Abu Sufyan sent word to the Qurayshite fighters to return to Mecca. However, Abu Jahl insisted on proceeding, saying, "By God, we will not turn back until we reach Badr and stay there for three nights. We shall butcher slaughter camels, host a great feast and drink wine to the sound of our slave girls' music. Then the rest of the Arabs will hear of our march out to the

battlefield and continue to hold us in awe."

As the Qurayshites marched on until they reached the far side of the valley, the Prophet (pbuh) encamped next to the well nearest the well of Badr. Once they had arrived, Hubab Ibn al-Mundhir said, "O Messenger of God, have we encamped here based on a command from God, such that we can neither move forward nor retreat? Or is it merely a matter of opinion and war strategy?"

"It is the latter," he (pbuh) replied.

"In that case," said Hubab, "move your men to the well nearest the enemy. Once we have set up camp there, we can fill the wells beyond with sand, then build a cistern on top of the well we have camped beside and fill it with water. When we fight the enemy, we will have water to drink but they will not."

So the Messenger of God (pbuh) rose and moved to the place which had been proposed by Hubab, may God be pleased with him.[123]

Then Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, not wishing the Muslims who had stayed behind in Mecca to be bereaved of the Prophet (pbuh), suggested that an arbor be built for him (pbuh) to protect him from danger. He (pbuh) agreed to the idea, then began reassuring his Companions of God's succor and victory. Placing his hand on the ground, first here, then there, he (pbuh) began telling them, "Here is where so-and-so will die (referring to one of the polytheists), and here is where so-and-so will meet his end." And in fact, every one of the men of whom he spoke perished in exactly the spot where he had laid his hand![124]

On the 17th of Ramadan, a Friday night, the Messenger of God (pbuh) then began praying fervently to God Almighty, saying, "O God, the Qurayshites have come forth in their arrogance and pride, disobeying and defying You, and disbelieving Your Messenger. O God, I pray for the victory which You have promised me. O God, bring them to naught!"

He continued beseeching God with all earnestness and reverence, lifting his palms heavenward, until Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, feared for the Prophet's well-being. So, supporting him from behind, he said to him (pbuh), "O Messenger of God, be of good cheer. By the One Who holds my soul in His hand, God will surely bring about that which He has promised you."

Then all of the other Muslims likewise began entreating God to grant them victory and aid.[125]

On the morning of Friday, Ramadan 18, two years after the Hejira, the fighting began between the polytheists and the Muslims. The Prophet (pbuh) took a handful of pebbles and said to the men of Quraysh, "My your faces be disfigured."

Then he (pbuh) scattered the pebbles in the air until there was not a single man of Quraysh whose eyes were not filled with them. Once the fighting began, God supported the Muslims with angels who were sent to fight alongside them.[126] The battle ended in a great victory for the Muslims; seventy of Quraysh's chiefs were killed, and seventy others were taken captive, while fourteen of the Muslims were martyred.

The corpses of the slain polytheists, who included most of the chiefs of Quraysh, were cast into the well of Badr. The Messenger of God (pbuh) stood at the edge of the well and began calling to them and to their ancestors, saying, "O so-and-so, and O so-and-so son of so-and-so, are you pleased with the fact that you obeyed God and His Messenger? We have received what was promised us by our Lord. Have you received what you were promised by yours?"

'Umar then said, "O Messenger of God, how can you speak to spiritless bodies?"

He (pbuh) replied, saying, "By the One who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, I tell you, they can hear me as well as you can!"[127]

When the Prophet (pbuh) consulted with his Companions concerning the captives they had taken, Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, was of the view that they should accept a monetary ransom which would increase the Muslims' power, while giving the captives a chance to repent should God guide them aright. However, 'Umar Ibn al-Khahhab, may God be pleased with him, advised him (pbuh) to have them killed, because they were the leaders of those who deny the truth. As for the Prophet (pbuh), he was inclined toward the view expressed by Abu Bakr; hence, he ruled that they should be ransomed for a sum of money. However, verses from the Qur'an which were revealed subsequently reproached the Prophet (pbuh) for what he had done and supported the advice which had been offered by 'Umar. We read in these verses,

"It is not fitting for a prophet to keep captives unless he has made a great slaughter in the land. You desire the fleeting gains of this world – but God desires (for you the good of) the life to come; and God is Almighty, Wise. Had it not been for a decree from God that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen you a tremendous chastisement on account of all (the captives) that you took.[128] Enjoy, then, all that is lawful and good among the things which you have gained in war, and remain conscious of God" (Qur'an 8: 67-69).[129]

Lessons and Principles

The Battle of Badr contained lessons and morals of the greatest significance, as well as awesome miracles relating to the victory granted by God to the Muslims who clung to the principles of their faith and remained devoted to fulfilling the responsibilities of their religion. We summarize these lessons and morals below:

First: The primary cause for the Battle of Badr indicates to us that the original motivation for the Muslims' going forth with the Messenger of God (pbuh) was not to engage in war, but rather, simply to take over the Qurayshite caravan approaching from Syria under the leadership of Abu Sufyan. However, God – blessed and exalted be He – willed for His servants a larger prize, a greater victory, and a task more in keeping with the honorable end which Muslims should strive for in all aspects of their lives. Hence, He distanced from them the caravan which they had been seeking and replaced it with an assembly of enemy fighters which they had not anticipated. This fact points to two things:

That most of the possessions of enemy combatants are to be viewed as belonging to the Muslims. They are, therefore, to take possession of whatever comes into their hands. This ruling is agreed upon by most scholars of jurisprudence; however, the Emigrants who had been expelled from their homes and separated from their families in Mecca had an additional justification for seeking to take over the Qurayshite caravan, namely, the fact that when they were forced to leave Mecca, the possessions which they left behind had been seized by the polytheists, because of which they possessed the right to seek reparation, at least in part, for this loss.

That despite the legitimacy of this goal, the Almighty God willed for His believing servants to have an aim which was more lofty and more consistent with the task for which they had been created, namely, to call others to the religion of God, to engage in a sacred struggle for its sake, and to sacrifice both their belongings and their lives in order to exalt the Word of God. Hence, while Abu Sufyan won a victory in that his caravan was spared, the tribe of Quraysh suffered a significant defeat in the sphere of the jihad taking place between them and the Muslims. The divine instruction of the Muslims' souls is made vividly manifest in the words of God Almighty: "And remember when God gave you the promise that one of the two (enemy) parties would fall to you: and you wished that the one not armed (the caravan) should be yours, but God willed to justify the truth by His Words, and to cut off the roots of the disbelievers"

(Qur'an 8: 7).

Second: When we reflect upon the manner in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) consulted with his Companions concerning how to respond to the unanticipated situation they encountered when, after losing sight of the caravan, they came face to face with an imposing assembly of fully armed fighters, we become aware of two important points pertaining to Islamic law: (1) The Prophet's commitment to the principle of consultation with his Companions. If we review all the events of his (pbuh) life, we will find that he applied this principle in relation to all matters about which there was no clearly established text in the Word of God. This, in turn, has relevance to management and Islamic legal policy. For this reason, the Muslims are in unanimous agreement that consultation (shurá) concerning all matters about which there is no clearly established, binding text either from the Qur'an or the Sunnah is an unchanging legislative foundation which must not be neglected. However, in connection with matters concerning which there is a text from the Qur'an or a hadith from the Sunnah on the basis of which the Prophet (pbuh) issued a conclusive ruling, consultation may not be resorted to, and no additional ruling may be made upon them by any authority.

(2) Cases involving military assaults, treaties, and peace settlements between Muslims and non-Muslims are subject to what is referred to as Islamic legal policy, or what some people term, "the rule of the Imamate." This is made clear by the fact that the legitimacy of imposing jihad as a religious duty is a ruling whose source is divine revelation and which, for this reason, is not subject to any sort of abrogation or amendment. Similarly, the legitimacy of concluding peace agreements and treaties is firmly established, and may not be nullified or removed from the edicts arising from Islamic law. However, the various specific applications of this ruling may change depending on circumstances associated with time and place, as well as the particular conditions faced by the Muslims and their foes. The criterion used to determine the proper course of action in such cases is the insight possessed by the God-fearing, just Imam and the policies adopted by a ruler who has thoroughly studied the precepts of the religion with sincerity and purity of intention, in addition to constant reliance upon consultation with the Muslims in order to benefit from their varied opinions and expertise.

Hence, if such a ruler believes that it is in the Muslims' best interest not to engage in armed conflict with the enemy, and if he has confirmed the validity of his opinion through consultation and study, then he is to seek a peace settlement whose contents are consistent with all well-established texts of Islamic law until such time as circumstances call for different measures. If, on the other hand, he is convinced that the Muslims' well-being and a sound Islamic legal policy require armed jihad, then he has the prerogative to require his subjects to engage in armed conflict.

This is the approach favored by the majority of Muslim jurisprudents, and which is supported by numerous situations included in the prophetic biography. If, however, the Muslims are suddenly attacked by an enemy on their own soil, then it is their unequivocal duty to repel the attack with force; moreover, this duty is incumbent upon all Muslims, both male and female, provided that there is a need for their services and that they are of the proper age to be assigned such a responsibility.

Most jurisprudents also agree that although such consultation is legitimate, it is not binding. In other words, the Muslim ruler is obliged to seek enlightenment through consultation as he seeks to determine the right course of action. However, he is not required to adopt the majority point of view if most of those consulted disagree with his opinion. Al-Qurtubi says concerning this matter, "The ruler who consults with others studies the various points of view presented to him and, so far as he is able, adopts the point of view which most closely conforms to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Then, once having been guided by God to the course of action which meets this criterion, he carries it out, depending on God for the outcome."[130]

Third: There are some who will wonder: Why were the responses of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and al-Miqdad insufficient for the Prophet (pbuh), who went on looking into the faces of those around them until, when

Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh spoke, he (pbuh) was reassured? The answer to this question is that what the Prophet (pbuh) really wanted was to find out how the Helpers themselves felt about this matter. In other words, would their opinions and judgments be based merely on the covenant which they had concluded with him (pbuh), in which case they would consider that he had no right to oblige them to fight in his defense anywhere but inside Medina, as was stipulated in the agreement? Or would they respond based on their sentiments as believing Muslims and the greater, more comprehensive covenant which they had concluded with God himself? In the latter case, they would recognize the Prophet (pbuh) as the covenant's rightful custodian, and they would, likewise, recognize their duty to do complete justice to the agreement by carrying out the responsibilities which it entailed to the fullest extent.

When we consider the response given by Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, we see that the pledge of allegiance to which the Helpers committed themselves with the Messenger of God (pbuh) in Mecca prior to the Hejira had been none other than a pledge of allegiance to Almighty God. Hence, when they committed themselves to defend the Messenger of God (pbuh) when he emigrated from Mecca to live among them, they thought of themselves as defending the religion and law of God himself. It was not, then, an issue of certain texts to which they had agreed with the Messenger of God (pbuh) without being willing to commit themselves to anything beyond their literal purport. Rather, they had signed a pact of the greatest significance, whose contents are expressed in the words, "Verily, God has purchased of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return. They fight in God's Cause, and slay, and are slain" (Qur'an 9: 111).

Thus, when Sa'd replied, "We have believed you and placed our confidence in you. We have seen for ourselves that the message you bring is the truth.... So go forward to carry out your intention, for we are with you!" he was saying, in essence, "We march onward with you based on a covenant greater than the one which we concluded together at al-'Aqabah."

Fourth: It is permissible for the Imam, both in jihad and other situations, to make use of spies and observers so as to reveal the enemy's plans and assess the enemy's strength in terms of war materiel and man power. It is likewise permissible to adopt various methods of accomplishing this task, provided that they will do no harm to some interest which is of greater importance than obtaining information about the enemy. The means employed may require secrecy or some type of deceit and artifice; however, all of this is legitimate so long as it is a necessary means of protecting the Muslims and their interests.

We read in the books on the Prophet's biography that when he encamped near Badr, he and one of his Companions rode until they came upon an elderly Arab man. The Prophet (pbuh) asked the man what news he had heard about the Qurayshites and about Muhammad and his Companions.

The old man replied, "I will not tell you until you two tell me who you are."

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "If you tell us, we will tell you."

"Really?" ask the old man.

"Yes," said the Prophet (pbuh).

So the old man told him what he knew about the polytheists and what he had heard about the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions. When he was finished speaking, he said, "So, who are you two?"

"We are from water," said the Prophet (pbuh), then departed.

The old man began asking, "And what is 'from water'? From the water of Iraq?"

Fifth: The Prophet's conduct may be categorized into more than one type. The conversation which took place between the Prophet (pbuh) and al-Hubab Ibn al-Mundhir about the place where they had encamped (which, as we have seen, is narrated in a hadith with a sound chain of transmission) is evidence

that not all the things which the Prophet (pbuh) did are to be considered a basis for legislation. Rather, there are numerous occasions on which he (pbuh) conducted himself simply as a human being who thinks and plans as others do. In situations such as these – which include his decision to set up camp where he did before the Battle of Badr -- we are under no obligation to imitate the manner in which he (pbuh) conducted himself.

As we have seen, al-Hubab, may God be pleased with him, after making certain that the Prophet (pbuh) had not chosen this spot in response to some divine revelation, advised him (pbuh) to move elsewhere, and the Prophet (pbuh) consented to the idea. There are, in addition, a number of actions taken by the Prophet (pbuh) – such as many of his military-related decisions -- which come under the rubric of Islamic legal policy, and in which he (pbuh) acts in his capacity of imam or head of state, not in his capacity as a messenger who communicates the word of God. Scholars of jurisprudence devote long discussions to this matter, the details of which we have insufficient space to present here.

Sixth: The importance of praying fervently to God and seeking His aid. We have seen how the Prophet (pbuh) assured his Companions that victory would be theirs, and how his confidence in this fact was so firm that he began pointing to various spots on the ground, saying, "This is where so-and-so will meet his end." Moreover, events occurred just as he (pbuh) had predicted that they would, with each person to whom he had referred dying in exactly the spot he (pbuh) had indicated. Yet in spite of this, we see him staying awake the entire night preceding the battle, stretching forth his palms to heaven and beseeching his Lord to grant him the victory he had been promised. He remained standing so long that his cloak fell off and, fearful for his (pbuh) well-being, Abu Bakr clung to him, saying, "That is enough, O Messenger of God! God will surely accomplish that which He has promised you."

So, why all this fervent entreaty despite the fact that he (pbuh) was so certain of the outcome of the battle that he had said, "It is as if I am looking upon the places where our enemies will perish," after which he pointed to the actual spots where some of them would die? The answer to this question is that the Prophet's assurance of the victory he would be granted at Badr was based on his trust in the promise that God had given him. It is a certainty that God never breaks His promises; in fact, He may have revealed to him (pbuh) the fact that he would be given victory in this battle. However, the act of stretching forth one's palms heavenward in heartfelt entreaty and supplication is an expression of the servitude to God and reverence for Him for which human beings were created; it is also, in a sense, the price one pays for such a victory.

After all, victory – regardless of the earthly resources one has at his disposal – is nothing but a gift from God, to Whom all success is due. All God wants of us is for us to be His servants by a free act of our wills. No one has ever drawn near to God by virtue of anything more sublime than humble worship, nor has anyone merited an answer to prayer more than he who comes before Almighty God clothed in a spirit of submission and adoration. Similarly, all the various misfortunes and ordeals which threaten or befall us in this life are nothing but means by which God reminds us of our identity as His servants; such difficulties cause us to direct our hopes and thoughts anew to the greatness of God, may He be praised and exalted, and His unlimited power: fleeing to Him for refuge, laying before Him our weakness and vulnerability, and seeking His protection from all trials and temptations. When we allow this realization to be reflected in our conduct, we have arrived at the spiritual place where God has commanded all of us to stand and remain.

This humble veneration, manifested so marvelously in the Prophet's long, earnest prayer of supplication in which he begged his Lord to grant him victory, is the price by virtue of which he proved himself worthy of the extraordinary divine succor given to the Muslims in this battle. This event is referred to in the following noble Qur'anic verse: "(Remember) when you sought aid of your Sustainer, and He responded to you (saying): 'I will aid you with a thousand angels (each behind the other) in succession!'" (Qur'an 8:

9). The Prophet's certainty of the victory to come was, then, an outgrowth of his humble veneration for his Lord.

Compare, now, the spirit of worship which manifested itself in the attitude of the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the fruits which it bore, with the despotism and arrogance which revealed themselves in the words spoken by Abu Jahl, "By God, we will not turn back until we reach Badr and stay there for three nights. We will butcher slaughter camels, host a great feast and drink wine to the sound of our slave girls' music. Then the rest of the Arabs will hear about our march out to the battlefield and continue to hold us in awe!" Think carefully about the outcomes of this power-hungry hubris! The result of humble veneration and obedience to Almighty God was a firmly established power and glory to which the entire world was brought into submission, while the outcome of tyranny and presumptuousness was a grave filled with perdition and shame, prepared for the lords of worldly power in the very place where they were planning to sip wine and listen to the music of their slave girls. This is a divine law which reveals itself in the universe whenever heartfelt devotion to God encounters despotism and overweening pride.

Seventh: The angels sent to aid the Muslims at the Battle of Badr. The Battle of Badr witnessed an extraordinary miracle of divine aid, in that God sent forth angels to fight side by side with the Muslims. This is a fact which is confirmed by clear evidence from both the Qur'an and the collections of sound hadiths. Ibn Hisham narrates that the Prophet (pbuh) dozed off in the arbor which had been constructed for him, then awakened and said, "Be of good cheer, Abu Bakr. God's triumph has come to you. I saw Gabriel taking hold of the reins of his steed and riding atop a cloud of dust." The same event is related by al-Bukhari with similar wording.[131]

The clearest, most incontestable evidence that the word "angels" in the Book of God Almighty does not – as some mistakenly imagine – refer merely to some sort of spiritual or moral support is that the divine revelation specifies the actual number of angels, saying, and He responded to you (saying): "'I will aid you with a thousand angels following one upon another!'" (Qur'an 8: 9). After all, a specific number is a requirement when speaking of a distinct quantity of things, and may be used only with concrete, material objects. Hence, we know that it is a manifestation of the divine wisdom that the Qur'an thus specifies the number of angels, since in this manner, it thwarts the desires of those who attempt to interpret this verse as referring to nothing but moral support.

It is true, of course, that the descent of the angels to fight with the Muslims at Badr was indeed for the purpose of giving them reassurance. It was a perceptible response to the fervency of their plea for help – help which was needed in view of the fact that they were going into battle for the sake of God for the very first time, and were about to confront a fighting force which was three times their size in terms of both manpower and equipment. At the same time, however, it was not the angels themselves, but God alone who gave them the victory. In order to make this fact clear, Almighty God explains the angels' descent, saying, "God made this only as a glad tiding, and that your hearts would thereby be set at rest – since no victory can come from any save God. Verily, God is All-Mighty, All-Wise!" (Qur'an 8: 10).

Eighth: The transitional state of existence experienced by the dead. The Prophet's standing at the well's edge and calling out to the slain polytheists after they had died, as well as what he (pbuh) said to 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, concerning this matter, provides clear evidence that the dead experience a spiritual life, the nature of which we cannot know, and that their spirits continue to hover about their bodies. It is on this basis that one can imagine what is meant by the torment and bliss of those in the grave. However, this state of existence is far beyond the realm of our earth-bound intellects and physical perceptions. Hence, faith in such realities must come about by simply accepting them in trust once they have come down to us through sound, well-established means of transmission.

Nine: The question of the captives. The Prophet's consultation with his Companions in this regard, the

decision which was made to grant the captives' release in return for a ransom of money, then the revelation of Qur'anic verses reprimanding the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions for this decision, point to important principles:

This event serves as evidence that the Prophet (pbuh) possessed the right to engage in ijtihad.[132] Those who hold this view – and they are the majority of the scholars of Islamic jurisprudence – reached this conclusion based on the question concerning the captives taken at Badr. If it was possible for the Prophet (pbuh) to engage in ijtihad, then, it follows that it was possible for the resulting judgment to be either correct or incorrect. However, in those cases where his judgment was incorrect, the error would not be allowed to remain; rather, a Qur'anic verse would inevitably be revealed in order to correct his mistaken judgment. If no such verse was revealed following the judgment, this indicated that his (pbuh) judgment had been correct, being in accordance with the truth as known by God Almighty.

In his Sharh al-Luma' fi Usul al-Fiqh, Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi states, "It was possible for him (pbuh) to err; however, he was not allowed to remain in error. Instead, he was soon made aware of it." He also says, "There are those who maintain that he (pbuh) was not permitted to err; however, this is incorrect, as may be seen from the words of God Almighty, "May God forgive you (O Prophet)! Why did you grant them permission (to stay at home)?" (Qur'an 9: 43)[133]

In his commentary on al-Baydawi's Minhaj 'Ilm Usul al-Fiqh ("The Methodology of the Science of the Foundations of Jurisprudence"), al-Asnawi states, "Al-¤midi and Ibn al-Hajib maintain that he (pbuh) was capable of erring, provided that the error was not allowed to remain. This view was passed down by al-¤midi from most adherents of the Hanbali school as well as most hadith scholars."[134]

Similarly, commenting on the words of God Almighty, "It is not fitting for a prophet to keep captives until he has made a great slaughter in the land... ." (Qur'an 8: 67), Imam al-Baydawi states, "This verse shows that the prophets, may blessings and peace be upon them, engage in ijtihad and that the judgments at which they arrive may be incorrect, but that, if any such judgment is incorrect, they will not be allowed to maintain it."

There are some who may decry the notion of attributing error to the Messenger of God (pbuh), mistakenly imagining that error is tantamount to sin, corruption, or some other vice which would be inconsistent with the sinlessness which is known to have characterized God's prophets. However, what is meant by "error" here is simply a lack of correspondence between the independent judgment reached by the Prophet (pbuh) and the unchanging, perfect knowledge of God. Such an action is not in conflict with his (pbuh) sinlessness; on the contrary, it is something for which he merits reward from God. As in the case of any jurist who issues an independent judgement based on his faculty of reasoning and certain recognized principles, people have a responsibility to obey him (pbuh) in such judgements unless some Qur'anic verse is revealed to the effect that he is to adopt some different judgment. Hence, the judgements reached by the Prophet (pbuh) and with respect to which he has received no revelation possess two aspects, the first relating to other people, and the second relating to the knowledge of God Almighty. In relation to the first aspect, it can never be described as incorrect because, not having the capacity to see the hidden knowledge of the Divine, people are under obligation to follow it just as they are obliged to conform to the judgments of all those who engage in ijtihad based on his example. As for the Prophet's ijtihad in its second aspect, that is, as it relates to the knowledge of God Almighty, it may be described either as correct or as incorrect, since it may or may not correspond to the perfection of God's knowledge. As the Prophet (pbuh) attained to higher and higher levels of perfection, he came to see the previous stages of his development as incomplete and imperfect by comparison with the stages he had attained thereafter; hence, he (pbuh) used to pray for God's forgiveness for these previous states just as we ask to be forgiven for our sins, saying, "It is such a burden to my soul that I ask for God's forgiveness seventy times a day."

(2) Just as the Battle of Badr was the Muslims' first experience with sacrifice and fighting for the sake of God, weak and few in number though they were, it was also their first experience of being tempted by the sight of the spoils of war in the aftermath of battle.

As we have seen above, God in His wisdom established the Muslims' hearts and encouraged them by means of miracles that provided clear evidence of the victory that awaited them. Then, at the right moment, the divine wisdom dealt with their experience of seeing the spoils of war before them while they themselves were suffering from need and indigence by means of a subtle, yet rigorous educational technique, as it were. The effect of this experience revealed itself in two scenes following the battle. The first was when, after the polytheists were defeated and left their money and various possessions behind, some of the Muslims began trying to beat one another to the spoils. Some of them got into such a disagreement over who most deserved them that they nearly came to blows. At this time, the ruling concerning the distribution of spoils among Muslim fighters had not yet been revealed; hence, they brought their dispute before the Prophet (pbuh). It was at this time that the following words from God were revealed:

They ask you (O Muhammad) about the spoils of war. Say: 'The spoils of war are for God and the Messenger.' So fear God, and adjust all matters of difference among you, and obey God and His Messenger, if you are (truly) believers! Believers are only those who, when God is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts, and when His verses are recited unto them, they (i.e., the verses) increase their faith; and they put their trust in their Lord (alone)" (Qur'an 8: 1-2).

As you can see, these two verses contain no reply to their question; on the contrary, they direct the Muslims' attention away from their dispute entirely, saying: The spoils belong to none of you; rather, they belong to God and His Messenger. As for you, your task is to resolve the difference which has arisen among you, obeying God in all His commands and avoiding that which He has forbidden. In matters pertaining to this world and the wealth therein, you are to rely on God Almighty. Thereafter, when these Muslims had heeded the guidance contained in these verses and turned their attention away from the matter over which they had disputed, God – in a brilliant didactic tour de force -- revealed other verses which specified how the spoils were to be divided among the various Muslim fighters.

As for the second scene, it was when the Messenger of God (pbuh) consulted with his Companions concerning the prisoners of war taken at Badr and they all inclined toward ransoming them with money. The intention behind this course of action was to demonstrate mercy and clemency toward the captives in the hope that they might soften their hearts and believe in God. At the same time, this offered a means of obtaining compensation for the money the Emigrants had left behind in Mecca. The point of view to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was disposed is evidence of the great compassion he felt toward his Companions. It was this same compassion which moved him to raise his hands in supplication on behalf of the Emigrants when he (pbuh) saw them marching out to Badr in an obvious state of indigence and neediness, saying, "O Lord, they are barefoot, so bear them up! They are naked, so clothe them! They are hungry, so cause them to be satisfied!" [135]

However, it was not the divine will that the Muslims should take this view of money as a standard, or even a partial standard, for the judgments which they would make on major issues of concern to them – issues which must be judged on the basis of a purely religious point of view, regardless of the situation and circumstances. If they had been allowed to rely on such a perspective as they faced their first experience of this kind, they may have grown accustomed to relying on a materialist outlook in making other, related, judgments, which ought to remain far removed from the influence of worldly aims. After all, once we have walked any distance in the ways of the world and developed a taste for its pleasures, it becomes increasingly difficult to wean ourselves away from them.

Muslim relates that 'Umar Ibn Khahhab said,

I came to visit the Messenger of God (pbuh) after he had decided to ransom the captives. When I arrived, I found him (pbuh) and Abu Bakr sitting together and weeping.

I said, "O Messenger of God, tell me what you and your companion are weeping about. If I found some cause for weeping, I would weep myself. But even if I did not, I would weep to see the two of you weeping."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, "I am weeping over the proposal made to me by your companions to accept a ransom for the captives. I can see their torment (in the hereafter) as if it were closer to me than this tree (referring to a tree that stood not far from him (pbuh))."

It was then that God Almighty revealed the words, "It is not fitting for a prophet to keep captives unless he has made a great slaughter in the land. You desire the fleeting gains of this world – but God desires (for you the good of) the life to come; and God is Almighty, Wise. Had it not been for a decree from God that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen you a tremendous chastisement on account of all (the captives) that you took. Enjoy, then, all that is lawful and good among the things which you have gained in war, and remain conscious of God" (Qur'an 8: 67-69).[136]

The Tribe of Banu Qaynuqa‘:
The First Jewish Betrayal of the Muslims

Ibn Ishaq tells us:

The Messenger of God (pbuh) assembled Banu Qaynuqa‘ in the Qaynuqa‘ market and said to them, “O company of Jews, fear God Almighty, lest you be afflicted with the same curse which befell the tribe of Quraysh. Surrender yourselves to God, for you know that I am a prophet whom He has sent. You will find evidence for this in your own scriptures, and in God’s covenant with you.”

“O Muhammad,” they replied, “Do you think that we are like your own people? Do not be deceived into thinking that you are dealing with a people who know nothing of war. We swear to God, if you make war on us, you will know what kind of people we are!”

In an account narrated on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn Ja‘far Ibn al-Miswar Ibn Makhramah, on the authority of Abu ‘Awanah, Ibn Hisham tells us that:

An Arab woman came to the Qaynuqa‘ market with some wares she wished to sell. As she sat with a jeweler showing him her merchandise, some men began trying to provoke her into revealing her face, but she refused. Then the jeweler took the edge of her dress and fastened it to her back such that when she stood up, her private parts were exposed. The men laughed at her, and she screamed, causing a Muslim man to assault the jeweler and kill him. Now, the jeweler was a Jew, so the Jews fell upon the Muslim who had done this, killing him in turn. The family of the slain Muslim man then roused the other Muslims against the Jews, and a huge brawl broke out between them and the Banu Qaynuqa‘. These were the first Jews to violate the covenant they had made with the Messenger of God (pbuh).[137]

According to al-Tabari and al-Waqidi, these events took place in the middle of the month of Shawwal in the year 2 A.H.[138]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then placed the Banu Qaynuqa‘ under siege for a period of time until they yielded to his rule. During this time, however, ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul (who had an alliance with the Banu Qaynuqa‘) went to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and said, “O Muhammad, spare my allies!”

However, he (pbuh) paid no attention to him. Ibn Ubayy then repeated what he had said, and again, the Prophet (pbuh) turned away from him.

He then placed his hand in the neck opening of the Prophet’s coat of mail.

“Let me go,” he (pbuh) said.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) repeated angrily, “Woe unto you, let me go!”

‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy replied, saying, “No, by God, I will not let you go until you agree to spare my allies! These four-hundred unarmed men and three-hundred armed men have protected me from all those who might have done me harm, and you intend to wipe them out in a single morning! I swear to you, I am a man who is wary of misfortune.”

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, "They are yours."

Thereupon he commanded Bani Qaynuqa' to leave Medina. So they departed for Adhri'at in Syria, where most of them perished.

'Ubadah Ibn al-Samit, who had entered into an alliance with this group of Jews just as 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy had, then went to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and said to him, "I call upon God, His Messenger (pbuh), and all of the believers to witness that I wash my hands of my alliance with these deniers of the truth." It was in this context that the following words were revealed:

O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another – and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them. Verily, God does not guide such evildoers. And you see those in whose hearts there is disease hurry to their friendship, saying (to themselves), "We fear lest some misfortune befall us.' Perhaps God may bring a victory (for the believers), or a decision according to His will. Then they will become regretful for what they have been keeping as a secret within themselves" (Qur'an 5: 51-52).

Lessons and Principles

This event, taken as a whole, indicates the extent to which the Jews who lived in the Prophet's day were prone to treachery and sedition. They were not content to live with others as neighbors without plotting evil against them or breaking faith with them. Moreover, they remained more than willing to invent any reason or means whatsoever to engage in such behavior. Through our detailed examination of this incident, we discover a number of important points:

The first point has to do with the attire required of the Muslim woman. As we have seen, the origin of this incident was the Jews' wish to persuade a Muslim woman who had come into their marketplace on business to unveil her face. There is no contradiction between the reason mentioned by Ibn Hisham, and the reason mentioned by all other narrators of the same incident, namely, the Jews' anger and resentment toward the Muslims for the victory they had been granted at the Battle of Badr. This sentiment is reflected in their saying to the Messenger of God (pbuh), "We swear to God, if you make war on us, you will know what kind of people we are!" As is most likely, the two reasons operated in tandem, with one reinforcing the other. After all, it is improbable that the Messenger of God (pbuh) would have renounced his covenant with them simply because they had evinced hatred toward the Muslims in their words and facial expressions. Rather, in accordance with Ibn Hisham's narrative, they must also have behaved in a manner which was harmful to the Muslims.

This incident indicates that the attire which Islam requires of the Muslim woman includes the covering of the face. Otherwise, there would have been no need for this woman to walk down the street with her face concealed. Moreover, if her facial covering had not been in response to a religious ordinance requiring her to do so, the Jews would have had no reason to behave as they did, since what they wanted was to offend her religious sensibilities, which were plainly manifest from her outward appearance.

Now, one might say that this story, which is narrated by no one but Ibn Hisham, need not be understood in too strict a fashion, and that it is insufficient by itself to serve as a foundation for such a ruling. However, it is supported by numerous other, well-attested hadiths whose validity is beyond doubt. One such hadith is narrated by al-Bukhari on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, in his section on, "The Attire Required of the Muhrim."[139] He says, "The woman who enters the state of ihram is not to veil her face, either completely or leaving only her eyes exposed. Nor is she to wear a bright yellow or saffron robe." A similar hadith is related by Malik in his Al-Muwatta' on the authority of Nafi', who reports that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar used to say, "The woman in the state of ihram is neither to cover her face nor wear

gloves."[140] What would be the point in forbidding the woman to cover her face either partially or completely while in a state of consecration for the pilgrimage, and why would this prohibition be addressed to the woman in particular, unless this were in response to Muslim women's actual practice at that time? In other words, this restriction serves as evidence that Muslim women were accustomed to covering their faces either partially or completely such that when defining the proper attire for the pilgrimage, it was necessary to spell out this exception for the woman.

Another, related hadith is narrated by Muslim and others concerning Fatimah Bint Qays. When Fatimah was divorced by her husband and the divorce was confirmed, the Messenger of God (pbuh) instructed her to spend her legally prescribed waiting period in the house of Umm Sharik. However, he (pbuh) then sent word to her, saying, "Umm Sharik's house is visited regularly by my Companions. Hence, you should go to the house of your paternal cousin, Ibn Umm Kulthum, since he is blind and will not see if you remove your face veil."

These, then, are the hadiths which indicate the necessity of a Muslim woman's covering her face and the rest of her body when in the presence of any strange man.[141] As for the evidence showing that a man is, in turn, forbidden to look upon a woman, this may likewise be found in numerous hadiths. For example, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and al-Tirmidhi relate on the authority of Barirah that the Messenger of God (pbuh) once said to 'Ali, "'Ali, don't look (at a woman) twice. The first look is permitted to you, but not the second." Al-Bukhari relates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that once on the Day of Sacrifice, the Prophet (pbuh) seated al-Fadl Ibn al-'Abbas behind him. When the latter began looking at a certain woman of the Khath'amah tribe with a bright, attractive face, the Prophet (pbuh) grasped him by the beard and turned his head to prevent him from looking at her.

These hadiths, then, contain two prohibitions: The woman's being forbidden to reveal her face or any other part of her body in the presence of strange men, and the man's being forbidden to look at a strange woman. Taken together, these hadiths provide ample proof that the woman's face is not to be visible to strange men except in specific situations, for example, those related to medical treatment, education, giving testimony in court, and so forth.

However, some scholars of the four Islamic schools of law hold that a woman's face and hands may be revealed in the presence of strange men. They interpret the aforementioned hadiths as indicating that covering the woman's face and hands is advisable, but not obligatory. It is unanimously agreed, however, that a man is not permitted to look at any part of a woman's body in a lustful manner, and that if an atmosphere of such immorality prevails in society that the majority of those who look at her are depraved individuals who will contemplate her in a forbidden manner, the woman must conceal her face. Moreover, when you consider the godlessness, sensuality, poor upbringing and corrupt morals which have become so epidemic in Muslim society, you will agree that under these circumstances, there is no basis for maintaining the permissibility of a woman's leaving her face unveiled. The dangerous decline being witnessed by Islamic society today requires – for the sake of the society's well-being and preservation – more discretion and more stringent precautions until the Muslims pass out of this perilous phase and become capable of exercising the self-restraint needed to deal with the crisis in which they find themselves.

In short, we are saying that the adoption of a path of license and permissiveness in the sphere of religious practice has the potential of becoming slippery ground beneath the feet of those who tread it, leading them to a place where they lose sight of their most fundamental duties. In order to keep this from occurring, what is needed is a sound socio-religious current which regulates such license within the context of an overall Islamic agenda, thereby preventing it from going beyond the proper bounds. What is astounding about some people is that they are dedicated to the notion of what they refer to as "changing rules with changing times" when it comes to relaxing rules and disengaging from one's duties; however, when the situation requires the opposite response, they forget this principle entirely. As for me, I find no example

which more clearly illustrates the necessity of "changing rules with changing times" than the need for the Muslim woman to conceal her face in response to the requirements of the precarious time in which we now live. As I have said, this time calls for increased circumspection in our conduct and closer attention to where we place our feet on the path until such time as God enables the Muslims to create the Islamic society they seek.

The second point raised by this incident is the ill-will which the Jews harbored in their hearts toward the Muslims. One might ask why it took all of three years for this hatred to surface. The answer is that what aroused their negative sentiments and brought them out into the light was the Muslims' victory at Badr, something which the Jews had not expected at all. Hence, no longer able to contain their pent-up rancor and hatred, they released it through the behavior reported in the narrative above. In fact, their malice toward the Muslims had already revealed itself quite blatantly in the comments they made following the Muslims' victory at Badr, saying, "Are you proud to have won a victory over a band of Qurayshites who know nothing of warfare? If we decided to gather our forces against you, you wouldn't stand a chance!"

Had the Jews respected the covenants and agreements into which they had entered with the Muslims, there would not have been so much as a single Muslim willing to utter an offensive word to them or disturb them in their homes or elsewhere. However, they were bent on evil, and they themselves suffered its consequences.

The third lesson offered by this incident has to do with the manner in which the hypocrite is to be treated in Islam. This incident, and the way in which 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy came to the Jews' defense, hardly conceal this man's hypocrisy. The attitude which he took in this situation makes it clear that he was merely pretending to be a Muslim and that in his heart of hearts, he wished the Muslims ill. Yet despite all this, the Messenger of God (pbuh) treated him as though he were a genuine Muslim. He (pbuh) did not go back on the covenant of protection between them, nor did he treat him as a polytheist, an apostate, or someone who was falsely claiming to be a Muslim. Instead, he (pbuh) simply granted him what he had requested with such importunity.

What this shows us – as is agreed upon by virtually all scholars of Islam – is that the hypocrite is to be treated by Muslims as though he were a true Muslim, even if his hypocrisy is undeniable. The reason for this has to do with the two aspects of which Islamic precepts consist. The first, "worldly" aspect is to be applied by Muslims to their societies and to relations amongst themselves under the supervision of the Caliph or the head of state; the second, "other-worldly" aspect is applied in the hereafter, and is subject to the judgment of God alone.

All judgments concerning the first aspect rest solely upon concrete, material, judicial evidence; subjective, inductive factors play no role whatsoever here. As for the second aspect, it rests upon what lies concealed in people's hearts and minds; hence, it can be judged by God alone. Al-Bukhari relates on the authority of 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, that the Prophet (pbuh) explained this principle by saying, "We take you now based on the outward actions which you perform." In another statement related by Muslim and al-Bukhari, he (pbuh) says, "When you bring your disputes to me, it may be that one of you presents a more astute, persuasive argument than another, and I judge matters based on what I hear. However, if I judge in favor of someone at the expense of his brother (when, in fact, the one in whose favor I ruled was a hypocrite), he will gain nothing thereby but a portion of hellfire."

The wisdom in this principle is that it prevents justice among people from being violated or manipulated by rulers who wish to rely on subjective and inferential evidence as a pretext for doing harm to certain individuals. In application of this Islamic legal principle, the Messenger of God (pbuh) used to treat the hypocrites just as he did to all other Muslims, without any discrimination in terms of general legal rulings. Moreover, he (pbuh) behaved in this manner despite the fact that, through divine revelation, he was privy

to a great deal of information about the hypocrites and the thoughts and sentiments they harbored. This, however, does not conflict with the need for Muslims to be aware of the existence of hypocrites and to be on constant guard against what they might do; on the contrary, this remains a duty incumbent upon Muslims at all times and in all circumstances.

Fourthly, if we reflect on the legislative outcome of this incident, namely, the Qur'anic verses which were revealed in comment upon it, we will realize that no Muslim is permitted to take a non-Muslim as an ally, that is, as a companion with whom he shares the responsibility to offer assistance and cooperation. Given the numerous, straightforward Qur'anic verses and prophetic Traditions related to this Islamic precept, there has never been the slightest disagreement over it among Muslims. As for the texts themselves, there is no need to mention them here, as they are well known and can be accessed without difficulty by those interested in studying the matter further.

There is only one exception to this ruling, namely, a case in which the Muslims are in a condition of such weakness that they have no choice but to enter into such an alliance. God allows such a decision in the words, "Let not the believers take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers, and whoever does so cuts himself off from God in everything -- unless it be to protect yourselves against them in this way" (Qur'an 3: 28).

It should be noted here that the prohibition against entering into alliances with non-Muslims is not a command to harbor ill-will against them. On the contrary, the Muslim is forbidden to harbor ill-will against anyone. There is a major difference between getting angry at someone for God's sake, and bearing a grudge against him. In the former case, the anger is caused by some action which is unacceptable to God Almighty on account of which the Muslim ought to become angry with the person who committed it; in the latter case, the anger is a response to the person himself, and has nothing to do with anything he has said or done, and this is forbidden to the Muslim.

Moreover, anger for God's sake is, in essence, a result of compassion for the disobedient individual or the one who denies the truth. The believer desires for others that which he desires for himself, and there is nothing he desires more for himself than to be delivered from torment on the Day of Judgement and to be assured of eternal bliss. Hence, when he becomes angry with those who disobey God and deny His truth, what leads him to do so is his zeal for their welfare and the pain he feels at the thought of the misery and divine retribution to which they are exposing themselves in the hereafter. This type of anger has nothing to do with malice, just as a father's anger at his son, or a brother's anger at his brother arises not from malice, but rather, from concern for his best interests and happiness.

Hence, this fact is consistent with severe treatment of those bent on denying the truth, since in many cases, severity is the only means by which to bring about the desired reform; this being so, such harshness is the necessary outgrowth of compassion and mercy. As one poet has said:

He was cruel in order that they might stand rebuked,

Whoever is merciful, let him be cruel at times

toward those upon whom he feels mercy.

It is also important to be aware that the prohibition against entering into alliances with those who deny the truth does not mean that we are allowed to be lax in fulfilling the principle of justice toward such people and respecting the treaties into which we may have entered with them. For justice is to be carried out at all times, and revulsion and anger for God's sake must not hinder the fulfillment of perfect justice. As God Almighty says:

O you who believe! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do" (Qur'an 5: 8).

In other words, as was set forth in the constitution discussed above, the Muslims form a single, unified nation. This being the case, their primary loyalty and brotherly ties must be reserved for one another. As for their treatment of other people, it must be based on a foundation of strict justice, good will toward all, and the prayer that everyone may experience blessing and right guidance.

The Battle of Uhud

The cause of this battle was that the leaders of Quraysh agreed to avenge the Qurayshites who had been slain at Badr, making use of the wealth provided by Abu Sufyan's caravan to equip a powerful army to go out against the Messenger of God (pbuh); they were also joined in this endeavor by the Ahabish.[142] They also enlisted the aid of a large number of women, whose job would be to prevent the men from fleeing if they were surrounded by the Muslims. By the time they departed from Mecca, their numbers had reached 3,000 fighting men.

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) heard the news, he consulted with his Companions, giving them the choice either to go out and meet the Qurayshites in battle or to remain in Medina such that if the Qurayshites entered the city, they would fight them there. Some of the elder Muslims, including 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul, were of the opinion that they should not leave Medina. However, many of the Companions who had not had the honor of fighting at Badr wished to go out, saying, "O Messenger of God (pbuh), take us out against our enemies, lest they think us too cowardly or weak to confront them." Those who held this opinion continued to speak thus to the Messenger of God (pbuh) until he agreed to their request. After much discussion, he (pbuh) went into his house, put on his coat of armor, and took up his sword. Then those who had been so insistent upon going out to battle began to fear that they had coerced the Prophet (pbuh) into doing this against his will, and they regretted what they had said. So when he reemerged from his house, they said, "We have forced you into this, O Messenger of God, and we should not have done that. So if you wish, remain here." He (pbuh) replied, "Once a prophet has put on his coat of mail to fight for his people, he must not take it off again until he has gone out to battle."[143]

The Prophet (pbuh) set out with one thousand of his men on Saturday, the 7th of Shawwal, thirty-two months after the Hegirah.[144] However, as they were on their way from Medina to Uhud, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul took one third of the army – most of them being his followers and companions -- and turned back, saying, "He disobeyed me, taking the advice of young men and those who know not of what they speak. We do not know on what account we are going out to kill ourselves!"

'Abdullah Ibn Haram went after them, pleading with them for God's sake not to abandon their prophet. However, they ignored his plea. Their leader said, "If we knew how to fight, we would follow you." According to al-Bukhari, may God be pleased with him, there was a disagreement among the Muslims concerning those who had turned back, with some of them saying, "Let us fight them," and others saying, "Let them go." It was in this context that God revealed the words,

Then, what is the matter with you that you are divided into two parties about the hypocrites? Seeing that God (Himself) has cast them back (to disbelieve) because of their guilt. Do you want to guide him whom God has made to go astray? And he whom God has made to go astray, you will never find for him any way (of guidance)" (Qur'an 4: 88).[145]

Some of the Companions suggested that they seek aid from the Jews in view of the covenant of mutual assistance between them and the Muslims. However, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "We shall not seek aid from idolaters against other idolaters."[146]

With only seven hundred fighters, the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions encamped in a mountain pass at Uhud, with the Muslims' backs to Uhud and fifty archers behind them on the mountain. He placed ʻAbdullah Ibn Jubayr in command over the archers and gave them instructions, saying, "Maintain your positions, and protect our backs. If you see us winning the battle, do not join us, and if you see us being killed, do not come to our aid."[147]

Two fifteen-year-old boys by the names of Rafiʻ Ibn Khadij and Samurah Ibn Jundub pleaded with the Prophet (pbuh) to let them take part in the fighting. However, the Prophet (pbuh) sent them back on account of their youth. Someone then said to him (pbuh), "O Messenger of God, Rafiʻ is an archer," so he (pbuh) gave him permission. Then Samurah Ibn Jundub came up and said, "And I am strong enough to wrestle Rafiʻ to the ground!" So he let Samurah fight as well.

The Prophet then took a sword and said, "Who will take this sword and fight with it worthily?" Abu Dujanah stepped forward, saying, "I will." So he (pbuh) gave it to him, whereupon Abu Dujanah took out a red headband and wrapped it around his head (which was what he did whenever he intended to fight to the death). Then he began strutting back and forth among the other fighters. The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "This gait is odious to God except in a situation such as this."[148] The Messenger of God (pbuh) then gave the banner to Musʻab Ibn ʻUmayr, may God be pleased with him. The polytheists' right flank was being led by Khalid Ibn al-Walid, and their left flank by ʻIkrimah Ibn Abi Jahl.

The armies then engaged and the battle heated up, with the Muslims making astounding inroads against the polytheists. In the vanguard of the fencers were Abu Dujanah, Hamzah Ibn ʻAbd al-Muhhalib, and Musʻab Ibn ʻUmayr. Musʻab was then killed in front of the Prophet (pbuh), and the standard was passed to ʻAli Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him. No sooner had this taken place than God sent down victory upon the Muslims: The polytheists were routed and began to flee for their lives, while their women called down affliction upon their enemies. The Muslims pursued them, slaying and gathering booty. When the archers stationed on the mountain side saw what was happening, they began arguing about whether to come down; a large number of them did so, thinking that the war was over, and they joined their companions in plundering the enemy. However, their commander, ʻAbdullah Ibn Jubayr, maintained his position along with a small number of others, saying, "I will not violate the orders given me by the Messenger of God (pbuh)." Meanwhile, Khalid Ibn al-Walid, having seen how few fighters remained on the mountain, came charging back toward the mountain with ʻIkrimah not far behind. Once up the mountain, they attacked and killed the remaining archers along with their commander, then went on to attack the Muslim army from the rear.[149]

At this point, the Muslims were exposed before the enemy and, terrified, they began fighting helter-skelter while the polytheists inflicted major losses on them. The Muslims were in such a state of disarray that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was pelted with stones until he fell on his side, one of his molar teeth was broken, and he suffered a gash in the face. His face bleeding profusely, he wiped off the blood, saying, "What prosperity can come to a people who spatter the face of their prophet with blood as he calls them to the worship of their Lord?" Fatimah, may God be pleased with her, came and washed away the blood as ʻAli poured water out of a shield. Then, seeing that the water did nothing but increase the flow of blood, she took a piece of cloth, burned it to ashes, then pressed the ashes into the wound until the bleeding stopped.[150]

Meanwhile, a rumor began to spread that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had been killed. This rumor, more than anything else, struck terror in the hearts of some of the Muslims, causing those whose faith was weak to say, "What are we standing here for, then, if the Apostle has been killed?" As they turned and fled, Anas Ibn al-Nadr said, "In fact, what good will it do for you to live once the Messenger of God (pbuh) is gone?" Then, pointing to some of the hypocrites and those weak in faith, he said, "O Lord, I feel ashamed of what

such people are saying, and I am innocent of their words!" Then he entered the battle once again, wielding his sword against the polytheists until he was slain.[151]

At the same time, the battle was witnessing a marvelous display of self-sacrifice on the part of the Companions who, standing guard around the Messenger of God (pbuh), began freely offering up their lives on his behalf until most of them had been killed. Al-Bukhari relates how the Muslims came to the Prophet's defense on the day of Uhud, with Abu Talhah, a powerful archer, making a protective barricade over the Prophet with a leather shield. When the Prophet (pbuh) lifted his head so as to look at the Muslim army, Abu Talhah said to him, "Don't get up or you'll be hit by an enemy arrow. My neck for yours!"[152]

Abu Dujanah, likewise, shielded the Messenger of God (pbuh) with his own body, letting the arrows pierce his back one after another as he knelt stone-still over the Prophet (pbuh). Another who did the same was Ziyad Ibn al-Sakan, who shielded the Messenger of God (pbuh) until he was killed along with five of his companions. According to Ibn Hisham's narrative, the last of these to die was 'Umarah Ibn Yazid Ibn al-Sakan, who fought in the Prophet's defense until his wounds had left him weak from fatigue. "Bring him over to me," the Prophet (pbuh) said. He (pbuh) then pillowed 'Umarah's head against his foot so that he died with his cheek resting on the Prophet's foot.

The fighting then subsided and the polytheists began to retreat, full of arrogant pride over the triumph they had achieved. When the Muslims saw their slain men, they were filled with dismay. Among them were Hamzah Ibn 'Abd al-Muhhalib, al-Yaman, Anas Ibn al-Nadr, Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr, and many others. The Prophet (pbuh) was particularly distressed over the death of his paternal uncle, Hamzah Ibn 'Abd al-Muhhalib, whose body had been mutilated, his abdomen having been split open and his nose and ears cut off. The Prophet (pbuh) began gathering the slain into pairs and wrapping two of them in a single robe. Then he (pbuh) would ask, "Which of the two had memorized more of the Qur'an?" Then, if he learned that one of them was distinguished in this way, he placed him ahead of his companion in the grave. He (pbuh) said, "I shall be their witness on the Day of Resurrection." Then he gave instructions for them to be buried; he did not pray over them, and their bodies were not washed.[153]

Meanwhile, the Jews and the hypocrites began gloating over the Muslims' misfortune. 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul and his companions said, "If you had done as we directed you, none of you would have been killed." They also began wondering aloud about the victory which they had expected to be granted with the Messenger of God (pbuh). In comment upon the Jews' and hypocrites' lying and rumor-spreading and in explanation of the wisdom to be found in what had taken place at Uhud, God Almighty then revealed the verses which begin, "And (remember, O Prophet, the day) when you left your household in the early morning to post the believers in their stations. And God is All-Hearer, All-Knower" and which end, "they are the ones who said about their (killed) brethren, 'If only they had listened to us, they would not have been killed.' Say: 'Avert, then, death from yourselves, if what you say is true!'" (Qur'an 3: 121-168).

The Messenger of God (pbuh) departed from Uhud on Saturday evening and spent that night in Medina with his Companions while the Muslims nursed their wounds. Then, after the Prophet (pbuh) had prayed the dawn prayer on Sunday morning, he instructed Bilal to announce that he (pbuh) was issuing a summons to go forth in pursuit of the enemy, and that no one was to go out except for those who had fought the day before. After calling for his standard to be brought forth in readiness for battle, he (pbuh) passed it to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him, and the army set out, virtually all of them either wounded or weakened. They encamped at Hamra' al-Asad (a place located ten miles from Medina), where they lit huge fires which could be seen from a long distance away, and which would delude others into thinking that they had come out in large numbers.

While the Muslims were thus encamped, a man by the name of Ma'bad al-Khuza'i (who at that time was a polytheist of the tribe of Khuza'ah) passed by. Continuing on his way, he went to see the polytheists, who were engaged in loud, smug merrymaking in celebration of the victory they had won at Uhud. They had been consulting together as to whether to go back to Medina to wipe out the Muslims there; however, Safwan Ibn Umayyah was opposed to the idea.

When Abu Sufyan saw Ma'bad, he said, "What news do you bring, O Ma'bad?"

"Woe to you!" he replied. "Muhammad has come out in search of us with his Companions, and they have come out in a throng the likes of which I have never seen before! They are burning with rage and the desire for revenge."

In this manner, God struck terror in the hearts of the polytheists, who headed back to Mecca in great haste. As for the Prophet (pbuh), he remained at Hamra' al-Asad Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, then returned to Medina.[154]

Lessons and Principles

The Battle of Uhud contains lessons of the greatest significance for Muslims. Through its taking place in the manner in which it did, God offers us a practical lesson in how to achieve victory in our battles with our enemies, and how to guard against the perils involved in failure and defeat. Let us examine these important lessons one at a time.

First: Here again one may see the principle which the Prophet (pbuh) always followed, namely, that of consulting with his Companions about any matter concerning which there was no definitive ruling from the Qur'an. However, in this situation we encounter something different from the consultation which had preceded the Battle of Badr. We note that once he (pbuh) had donned his coat of mail and made ready for battle, he (pbuh) was not willing to go back on the agreement he had reached with his Companions, who had proposed that they go forth to meet the enemy outside Medina. He (pbuh) behaved in this manner despite the fact that his Companions, realizing that he had appeared to favor staying in the city during their discussion of the matter, regretted what they had said and urged him to stay in Medina if this was what he believed to be best.

Perhaps the divine wisdom to be found in this is that once he (pbuh) had prepared himself for battle and appeared among his Companions and the rest of his people dressed in his coat of mail and bearing his sword, the time for discussion and consultation had passed, especially since this was a matter pertaining to war, which requires a significant degree of resolve and determination. Had the Prophet (pbuh) made the decision to stay home after he had shown himself prepared to go out, this may have created the impression of weakness and indecisiveness, which are often a result of groundless wariness and fear. Hence, disregarding the people's lamentation and mutual reproach, the Prophet (pbuh) replied to their words with the resoluteness, saying, "Once a prophet has put on his coat of mail to fight for his people, he must not take it off again until he has gone out to battle."

Second: The hypocrites played a prominent role in this battle. However, this was only fitting given that through this conflict, God was carrying out aspects of His wise plan, one of which involved purifying the believers' ranks of the hypocrites in their midst. This, in turn, was to serve the Muslims' best interests as time went on.

We have seen how, after the Muslim army's departure from Medina, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul turned back with three hundred of his followers rather than following the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions into battle. The alleged reason for this was that the Prophet (pbuh) had followed the advice of the young, inexperienced men, and not that of the older men – such as Ibn Salul – who were endowed with

greater knowledge and discernment. However, in actual fact, the reason for Ibn Salul's behavior was that he did not wish to go into battle and make himself vulnerable to its potential consequences. This is the most salient characteristic of hypocrites: They want to benefit from the gains Islam has to offer, yet hold themselves aloof from the hardships and losses to which it may expose them! What draws them to Islam is one of two things: some gain they expect to receive, or some tribulation they wish to avoid.

Third: The Prophet (pbuh) was unwilling to seek the aid of non-Muslims in this battle despite the Muslims' meager numbers. Ibn Sa'd relates in his (pbuh) Tabaqat that he (pbuh) said, "We shall not seek aid from idolaters against other idolaters."[155] Muslim narrates a hadith according to which when a certain man wished to follow the Prophet (pbuh) into battle at Badr, he (pbuh) asked him, "Do you believe in God? "No," replied the man. "Go back home, then, for I accept no assistance from idolaters."

On this basis, a significant majority of Islamic scholars hold that it is not permissible for Muslims to receive assistance from non-Muslims in warfare. Imam al-Shafi'i explains the matter, saying, "If the Imam believes that the non-Muslim in question is a person of integrity who will deal honestly with the Muslims, and if there is a need for his assistance, then it is permissible to seek it. Otherwise, however, it is disallowed."[156] This appears to be consistent with the majority of the relevant texts and with Islam's basic principles. It is also related that the Prophet (pbuh) accepted help from Safwan Ibn Umayyah during the Battle of Hunayn. The question has to do with what is termed "Islamic legal policy," and in the proper context, God willing, we will discuss the distinction between what the Prophet (pbuh) did at Hunayn, and what he (pbuh) did earlier at Badr and Uhud.

Fourth: A case worthy of reflection is that of the two fifteen-year-old boys, Samurah Ibn Jundub and Rafi' Ibn Khadij. These two youths pled with the Messenger of God (pbuh) to allow them to take part in the contest at Uhud. And what a contest it was! It was a fight to the death in which there was no parity whatsoever between the two warring sides, with the Muslims numbering no more than seven hundred and the polytheists numbering more than three thousand.

It is truly peculiar that some of those who make it their business to launch intellectual assaults on Islam have taken this incident and analyzed it in such a way as to support the conclusion that the Arabs were a nation of people who lived their entire lives in the shadow of war, as it were, being raised in an environment marked by ceaseless battles, and that for this reason, they looked upon combat as something so natural that it represented no cause for undue fear. When making these claims, those who engage in such analyses must surely be closing their eyes to the fact that, moved by the fear of combat and the results to which it could lead and the desire to ensure his well-being and safety, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul turned back from Badr with three hundred of his companions. They must, likewise, be turning a blind eye to the fact that others, enticed by the relief offered from the summer heat by Medina's shade, water, and fruits, ignored the Prophet's plea to come out to fight, saying, "Do not issue a call to arms in the heat." They even disregard the fact that, despite their superior numbers, the polytheists suffered a defeat at Badr, their hearts stricken with terror. Are these, then, the same Arabs who were so steeped in the mentality of war that they made light of its woes?

It would be exceedingly difficulty for the fair-minded researcher to escape the conclusion that is most intuitively clear, namely, that the secret behind the willingness exhibited by such youths to confront death head on was, simply, the outcome of the great faith which had captured their hearts, a faith which had given birth in turn to a passionate love for the Messenger of God (pbuh). Wherever such faith and love are to be found, they will give rise to this sort of boldness and heroism; conversely, wherever faith is weak and there is little love in one's heart, this same boldness will turn to timidity, and heroism to sloth and neglect.

Fifth: If you contemplate the Messenger of God (pbuh) as he was organizing the ranks of his Companions and setting up the protective rear guard which would be needed by the Muslim army, instructing the archers not to abandon their posts no matter what might happen to their fellow warriors until they had

received orders from him (pbuh), you will become aware of two notable facts.

The first of these facts is the military skill which characterized the Prophet's leadership in war; he (pbuh) was an outstanding military planner, well-versed in the arts and methods of warfare. There is no doubt that God Almighty equipped him with a rare genius in this area; however, let us repeat that this genius and skill remained subordinate to his identity as a prophet with a divine mission to fulfill.[157] It was this prophetic identity and this heavenly mission which required that he (pbuh) be the skilled genius that he was in the arts of war; it was these, likewise, which required that he be sinless and beyond the reach of any sort of perversion or error.

As for the second fact, it becomes apparent through the Prophet's precise instructions to his companions in general, and in particular, to the archers. Either by the special intuition granted to him as a prophet or by direct revelation from God, the Messenger of God (pbuh) appears to have sensed what would happen later, namely, that many of the archers would disobey his orders. He began stressing his instructions and orders as though, in so doing, he were conducting a live maneuver with his companions against a common enemy, namely, the human soul and its associated worldly lusts, including the covetous desire for wealth and spoils. Such a maneuver holds great benefits regardless of its outcome; in fact, a negative outcome may be more beneficial than a positive one.

Sixth: When Abu Dujanah took the sword from the Prophet's hand and began strutting about among the ranks of fighters, the Messenger of God (pbuh) did not reprove him for this behavior. Rather, he (pbuh) said, "This gait is odious to God except in a situation such as this." What this indicates is that the expressions of hubris which are forbidden in most situations become permissible in a time of war. One such manifestation of pride is for a Muslim to swagger about gleefully; this same behavior, however, is considered praiseworthy on the battlefield. Another example of a blameworthy expression of pride is the ornamentation of houses, plates, and cups with gold and silver, whereas the ornamentation of instruments of warfare in the same manner is not forbidden. The reason for this distinction is that in the context of warfare, such displays of arrogance are, in actual fact, expressions of pride in Islam's power over its enemies. In addition, it is an aspect of psychological warfare, the importance of which is something which Muslims would do well to realize.

Seventh: If we reflect on the events which took place during this battle between the Muslims and their enemies, we find that they can be divided into two phases. In the initial phase, the Muslims maintained the positions to which they had been assigned and were obedient to the orders which they had received from their Commander (pbuh). What, then, was the outcome of this obedience? The Muslims began rapidly to gain victory, while the polytheists began suffering defeat with equal speed. As this occurred, the hearts of the polytheists were overcome with fear, causing the three thousand fighters in their army to retreat from their positions and flee. It is this phase which is spoken of in the words of Almighty God, who says, "And God did, indeed, fulfil His promise to you when, by His permission, you were killing them (your enemies)..." (Qur'an 3: 152).

During the second phase, the Muslims took off in pursuit of the polytheists, delivering the final blow to everyone they overtook and collecting the resulting spoils. At this point, the archers positioned on the mountain looked down and saw their compatriots putting their fleeing enemies to the sword and coming back with the booty. Some of them wished to take part in gathering the spoils, and this desire on their part colored their thinking to the extent that they imagined that the orders they had received from the Messenger of God (pbuh) were no longer in effect and that there was no need to await his (pbuh) permission to leave their posts. This point of view was not shared by all of their fellow archers and, most particularly, by their commander, 'Abdullah Ibn Jubayr. Nevertheless, those who interpreted things in this manner went down and joined in the plundering. And what did this lead to?

The result was that the terror which had gripped the polytheists in the beginning now turned into death-

defying heroism! The way was now opened for Khalid Ibn al-Walid, who had heretofore been fleeing for his life, to employ the necessary cunning and stratagems to get the polytheists out of their predicament. He look around him and, when he saw the mountain that had previously been so well-fortified now devoid of protection, a gleam of military insight flashed into his head. No sooner had the thought occurred to him than he turned toward the mountain together with the other polytheists who were with him; they then killed those who remained on the mountain and began attacking the Muslims with arrows from behind. And as we have seen, it was now the Muslims who were panic-stricken. This phase of the battle is referred to in the Qur'anic verse which states:

... until the moment when you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed after He had brought you within view of that (victory) for which you were longing. Among you are some that desire this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then He made you flee from them (your enemy) in order that He might put you to a test" (Qur'an 3: 152).

Note the weightiness – and inclusiveness -- of the affliction which befell them as a consequence of this error! The transgression of just a few members of the Muslim army brought affliction upon them all, including even the Messenger of God (pbuh). This is a divine law at work in the universe, one which was not prevented from operating by the Prophet's presence with the army, nor by his being the most beloved of all creatures to his Lord.

If you reflect now on the seriousness of the misdeed committed by these individuals at Uhud in comparison with the multitudinous sins being perpetrated by Muslims today in virtually all spheres of their private and public lives, you will gain some conception of how gracious God is toward the Muslims not to destroy them for all the evil their hands have wrought, and for their failure even to carry out their duty to join together in enjoining the doing of what is right and forbidding the doing of what is wrong. If you ponder this point, you will perceive the divine wisdom in the fact that the Muslim nations remain in a state of defeat and weakness in the face of the other, unjust nations of the world despite the fact that the latter are non-believers and the former are Muslims.

Eighth: We have seen that the Prophet (pbuh) was seriously hurt during this battle: He fell on his side and received a head wound that led to profuse bleeding, and one of his teeth was broken off. Moreover, all of this resulted from that one sin, the sin committed by those Muslims who violated the instructions they had received from their Commander (pbuh). But, one might ask: What wisdom is to be found in the rumor which spread among the Muslim ranks to the effect that the Prophet (pbuh) had been killed?

The answer to this question is that the Muslims were so powerfully attached to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and to his presence among them that they could not have imagined his ever leaving them, nor could they conceive of having the strength to hold themselves together without him (pbuh). In short, the idea of the Messenger of God (pbuh) dying was something that had never occurred to them, as if they had blocked the notion out of their minds. There is no doubt, then, that if they had awakened from this state of incognizance to the news that he (pbuh) had actually died, it would have broken their hearts and shaken their faith to its very foundations; in fact, in the case of many of them, it would have destroyed their faith entirely. Hence, it was a manifestation of the most profound divine wisdom that this rumor was allowed to spread. It served as an educational experience alongside the great military lessons which were being offered to the Muslims, helping them to wake up to the reality for which they would have to prepare themselves from that time on – namely, that their Prophet (pbuh) would eventually die -- rather than turning on their heels if they found that he (pbuh) had vanished from their midst.

In order to clarify this most important lesson, certain Qur'anic verses were revealed in comment upon the faint-heartedness and desire to retreat which came over many of the Muslims when they heard the report that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had been slain: "Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) messengers have passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn about on your

heels (become disbelievers)? But he who turns back on his heels can in no wise harm God – whereas God will requite all who are grateful (to Him)" (Qur'an 3: 144).

The positive effect of this lesson became visible on the day when the Messenger of God (pbuh) did, in fact, go to join his Supreme Companion. It was the rumor which had spread at Uhud, together with the Qur'anic verses that had been revealed concerning it, which had alerted the Muslims to the truth that their Prophet (pbuh) would surely die some day. Hence, they bid him (pbuh) farewell with heavy hearts, then resumed the task which had been entrusted to them, namely, that of calling others to submit to the one God and engaging in the struggle needed to communicate this call to others. They undertook their mission anew, strong in their faith, in their certainty of the teaching to which they had committed themselves, and in their reliance upon God Almighty.

Ninth: Let us consider also the effect of death on the Prophet's Companions as they protected him with their own bodies from the blows and arrows of the polytheists. As they did so, they fell one after the other under a barrage of arrows, full of passionate exhilaration and a heartfelt desire to preserve the life of the Messenger of God (pbuh) with no thought for anything else! What, then, was the source of this extraordinary spirit of self-sacrifice?

Its source was, first of all, faith in God and His Apostle, followed by love for the Messenger of God (pbuh). These two factors are the reason behind this exceptional, marvelous spirit of self-sacrifice. Muslims are in need of both of these together. It is not sufficient for them to claim to believe in the doctrines they ought to believe in unless, in addition, their hearts are filled with love for God and His Messenger (pbuh). It is for this reason that he (pbuh) said, "None of you truly believes until I have become dearer to him than his father, his mother, his children, and all people."[158]

Evidence for this may be seen in the fact that God has endowed human beings with both reason and emotions, with both minds and hearts. He has endowed us with reason in order for us to think and, based on the process of reasoning, to believe in that which ought to be believed in. As for the emotions, they have been given to us as a means by which to love those whom God has commanded us to love, and to hate those whom God has commanded us to hate. If the heart is not occupied with the love of God, His Messenger, and God's righteous servants, then it will inevitably be occupied with love for our passions, desires, and that which is forbidden to us. And when the heart is filled with love for such things as these, mere belief alone will never suffice as a motivation to engage in any acts of sacrifice on behalf of another.

This fact is a fundamental axiom which is affirmed by scholars of education and ethics and supported by concrete experience. Note, for example, the following statement by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his book Emile:

How numerous are the statements which have been made about the desire to establish virtue on the basis of reason alone. And what a solid foundation, indeed! Virtue, it is said, is order. But, can faith in order alone overcome my own personal desires? This supposed principle is nothing but a game of words. After all, vice is likewise a love for order, only in a different form.[159]

This fact explains why the US Government was unable to maintain its commitment to the prohibition of alcoholic beverages despite its belief in the benefits to be gained therefrom. Not long after instituting this prohibition in the year 1933, the lawmakers retreated -- staggering, as it were, from the pain of deprivation -- and repealed the law which they had passed so that they could fill their glasses once again. Contrast this situation with that of the Prophet's Companions who, compared to the Americans of today, were less sophisticated and urbane and possessed less knowledge of the harm which alcohol can do and the benefits to be gained from abstention. Despite this disparity, we find that no sooner had the Companions heard God's command to avoid drinking than they poured out their wine jugs and broke their wine glasses, shouting, "We have given it up, Lord! We have given it up!" The difference between the two

situations lies in the fact that in this latter case, love for God's commands and precepts had taken root in people's hearts.

It was this love – indeed, this passion which had taken possession of the hearts of the Prophet's Companions – which caused them to stretch forth their necks to receive the enemy's blows rather than allow them to be suffered by the Messenger of God (pbuh), embracing death for themselves for the sake of preserving his (pbuh) life. The Battle of Uhud is replete with scenes which reveal the effect of this love when it fills someone's heart. Ibn Hisham narrates in this connection that the Prophet (pbuh) once asked his Companions, "Who of you can go see for me what has become of Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi' – is he dead or alive?"

One of the Helpers spoke up, saying, "I will, O Messenger of God."

So he went to find Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi', who was wounded and breathing his last. He said to him, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) has commanded me to find out whether you are dead or alive!"

"I am dead," Sa'd replied. "Please deliver my greetings of peace to the Messenger of God, and tell him, 'Sa'd Ibn al-Rabi' says to you: May God grant you the most abundant reward He has ever granted a prophet on behalf of his people.' Deliver my greetings of peace to my people as well, and tell them, 'None of you will have any excuse before God if harm comes to your Prophet (pbuh) when even so much as one of you is still alive.'"

And no sooner had he spoken these words than he died.

When the hearts of modern-day Muslims are so filled with this kind of love that it distances them from – and eventually overcomes -- their passions and self-centeredness, they will become a new creation, as it were, wresting triumph from the jaws of death and overcoming their enemies regardless of the obstacles in their path. As for the means to attaining such love, it lies in frequent remembrance of God, prayer for God's blessings upon His Messenger (pbuh), and constant reflection on the signs of God's glory and majesty, His blessings to you personally, and the life story and virtues of the Messenger of God (pbuh). These practices, of course, must be build upon a foundation of steady commitment to the prescribed rites of worship (prayer, fasting, hajj, and zakah) in a spirit of reverence and mindfulness, and periodic retreats to devote oneself exclusively to the worship of God.

Tenth: As we have seen from the account narrated by al-Bukhari, may God be pleased with him, the Prophet (pbuh) gave instructions for the Muslims slain at Uhud to be buried without being washed or prayed over, and he (pbuh) placed two men in a single grave. Muslim scholars have concluded from this that those who die as martyrs in wars of jihad are not to be washed or prayed over, but are to be buried just as they are. Al-Shafi'i, may God be pleased with him, explains this point by saying,

According to hadiths which have been passed down by numerous, separate chains of transmission, the Prophet (pbuh) did not pray over those who were slain at Uhud. As for the account according to which he (pbuh) prayed over them in groups of ten, each of which included Hamzah, until he (pbuh) had prayed over him seventy times, this is a weak, inaccurate hadith.[160]

This account has also served as the basis for the ruling that it is permissible, when necessary, to place more than one body in the same grave; if there is no necessity, however, it is disallowed.

Eleventh: When we consider the action taken by the Messenger of God (pbuh) with his Companions immediately after their return to Medina, namely, that of going out again in pursuit of the polytheists, the lesson offered by the Battle of Uhud makes itself perfectly clear, and we see not only its negative outcomes, but its positive ones as well. In short, it becomes unmistakably clear that victory comes only through steadfast endurance, obedience to the commands issued by the righteous leader, and acting purely on the basis of religiously inspired motives and ends.

As we have seen, no sooner had the Prophet (pbuh) announced that he would be setting out again in search of the enemy than those who had fought with him the day before gathered in readiness. They did so despite the fact that they were still exhausted and in pain from the wounds they had suffered, with none of them having had the opportunity to rest in his home or take time to look at what sort of a state he was in. In this condition, then, they set forth behind the Messenger of God (pbuh) in pursuit of the polytheists, who were still in a state of euphoria over the victory they had won the previous day. This time, however, there was not a single Muslim among them who had come out in pursuit of booty or any other worldly aim; rather, marching forth accompanied by their open wounds and sores, they sought either victory, or martyrdom for God's sake.

What, then, was the outcome of this campaign? Just as the pleasure and exhilaration born of triumph failed to give the polytheists sufficient strength to complete their victory over their opponents, neither did the Muslims' defeat and pain prevent them from taking action again and claiming their triumph. How was this possible? It was made possible by a miraculous sign from God whose purpose was to complete the lesson which God had begun to teach the Muslims. The hearts of the polytheists were suddenly stricken with terror and they imagined that, as they had been told by their companion who had seen the Muslims from a distance, Muhammad (pbuh) and his Companions had come out this time to sow certain death among them. So, though they had been on their way to Medina, they turned on their heels and fled back to Mecca as fast as their feet would carry them!

As for the question of how this strange panic could have come over them when, just hours earlier, they had routed the Muslim army and put them to the sword, the explanation lies solely in the divine will, which turned this entire battle into an eloquent lesson for the Muslims, a lesson which combined both positive and negative aspects. Concerning this crowning conclusion to the admonition embodied in the Battle of Uhud, the following words of God were revealed:

Those who responded to (the call of) God and the Messenger after misfortune had befallen them; for those of them who did good deeds and feared God, there is a great reward. Those who have been warned by other people, 'Behold, people (pagans) have gathered against you; so beware of them!' But it only increased them in faith, and they said, 'God (Alone)is sufficient for us; and He is the best Disposer of affairs (for us)'. So they returned (from the battle) with grace and bounty from God. No harm touched them; and they followed the good pleasure of God. And God is the Owner of great bounty" (Qur'an 3: 172-174).

The Confrontations at Raji‘ and Bi’r Ma‘unah

The Battle of Raji‘ (3 A.H.)

A delegation from the tribes of ‘Udal and al-Qarah came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) to tell him that news of Islam had reached them, and that they were in need of someone to instruct them in matters of this religion. In response, the Prophet (pbuh) sent them a group of his Companions, including Marthad Ibn Abu Marthad, Khalid Ibn al-Bakir, Asim Ibn Thabit, Khubayb Ibn ‘Adi, Zayd Ibn al-Dathinah, and ‘Abdullah Ibn Tariq, with Asim Ibn Thabit as their leader.

With a chain of transmission going back to Abu Hurayrah, al-Bukhari narrates the following account:

The (Muslim) envoys set out on their journey and traveled until, when they were somewhere between ‘Asafan and Mecca, news of their coming reached a branch of the Hudhayl tribe known as Banu Lihyan, who set out in pursuit of them with around one hundred archers. Banu Lihyan followed their tracks until they reached a campsite where the envoys had stayed. Coming upon some date pits, they said, “These are dates from Yathrib,” whereupon they continued trailing them until they overtook them.

When they caught up with Asim and his companions, the latter had stopped on top of a hill, so they surrounded them and said, “You have our word that if you come down to us, we will not kill any of your men.”

“As for me,” Asim replied, “I do not place myself under the protection of an unbeliever. O Lord, let Your Prophet know what has befallen us!”

The men of Banu Lihyan then attacked the envoys and the fighting continued until they had killed Asim with their arrows along with six other men. Khubayb, Zayd, and one other man were left, and Banu Lihyan promised to do them no harm.[161]

After Banu Lihyan had given them their word of honor, the three men came down to them. However, as soon as they had the three men in their power, they loosened their bowstrings and tied them up with them. The man who had been taken along with Khubayb and Zayd said, “This is the beginning of the treachery,” and he refused to go with them.

Banu Lihyan dragged him along by his fetters in order to force him to come with them, but he still refused, so they killed him. Then they took Khubayb and Zayd to Mecca, where they sold them. Khubayb was bought by the Banu al-Harith, since it was he who had killed al-Harith at the Battle of Badr, and they held him captive with the intentiont of putting him to death.

One day Khubayb borrowed a razor from a girl of the tribe in order to shave his beard.

The girl said, “I was distracted one day from watching a little boy of mine, so he toddled over to Khubayb, who sat him in his lap. When I saw him with the razor in his hand, I panicked so visibly, he could see it in my face.”

'Are you afraid I might kill him?' he asked me. 'I wouldn't do that, so help me, God!'

The same girl used to say, "Never in my life have I seen a captive who was a kinder person than Khubayb. Once I saw him eating some freshly picked grapes, even though we had no such fruit in Mecca at the time. Besides, he was bound in chains. So they must have been a provision sent to him by God."

Eventually, when they led Khubayb outside the city to put him to death, he said, "Allow me to pray two cycles of prayer."

Then he turned to them and said, "I would like to pray more than this; however, lest you think that I fear death, I shall content myself with these two cycles of prayer!" It was Khubayb who first established the practice of performing two cycles of prayer before being put to death.

Then he said, "When I am slain as a Muslim, I care not where I meet my end, for my death takes place in the soul of God Himself who, if He wills, can bless the severed members of a mangled corpse."

Then 'Uqbah Ibn al-Harith rose and put him to death. Thereupon, the Qurayshites sent envoys to bring back part of Asim's body which they could recognize as his. Now, it so happened that Asim had killed one of the Qurayshites' leading men at the Battle of Badr; hence, God sent a cloud of hornets and bees to hover about his corpse, thereby preventing the Qurayshite emissaries from doing him any harm.[162]

Adding to this account, Al-Tabari narrates the following on the authority of Abu Kurayb:

We were told by Ja'far Ibn 'Awn on the authority of Ibrahim Ibn Isma'il, who said: I was told by Ja'far Ibn 'Amr Ibn Umayyah, who was told by his father, who was told by his grandfather that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had sent him alone to spy on the Qurayshites. He said, "I came to the wooden post to which Khubayb had been tied, fearful that I might be seen by spies from Quraysh. Even so, I climbed up and untied him, whereupon he fell to the ground. I retreated to a spot not far away, then I looked back only to find that Khubayb's body was nowhere to be seen, as if the earth had swallowed him up. And to this very day, Khubayb's body has never been found."

Ibn Ishaq says, "As for Zayd, he was bought by Safwan Ibn Umayyah. When they took him outside the city precincts to kill him, Abu Sufyan said to him, 'Pray tell me, Zayd, would you not prefer that Muhammad be beheaded in your place, and that you yourself be at home with your family?!'

Zayd replied, 'By God, I would not want Muhammad, being where he is, to have so much as a thorn pricking him while I sit comfortably with my family!'

Abu Sufyan responded, saying, 'Never in my life have I seen people who love someone as much as Muhammad's Companions love him.'"[163]

The Battle of Bi'r Ma'unah (4 A.H.)

The Prophet (pbuh) was once visited by a man by the name of Amir Ibn Malik, popularly known as "the Spearhead Handler," whom he (pbuh) invited to accept Islam. Amir did not embrace Islam; neither, however, did he demonstrate any aversion to it. In fact, he said, "O Muhammad, if you were to send some of your Companions to the people of Najd to call people there to your religion, I believe they might respond favorably."

He (pbuh) replied, "I fear for their safety among the people of Najd."

"I will be their protector." Amir said. "Send them out, and let them call the people to your religion."

The Prophet (pbuh) then chose seventy of his Companions whom he knew to be outstanding Muslims and sent them forth. According to Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Kathir, this took place in the month of Safar, four months after the Battle of Uhud. When they reached Bi'r Ma'unah, they encamped there, then sent Haram Ibn Milhan with a letter from the Messenger of God (pbuh) to Amir Ibn al-Tufayl. However, when Haram delivered the letter to Amir, he did not read it; instead, he attacked him and killed him. Al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik that when Haram Ibn Milhan had been stabbed and his face was spattered with blood, he cried out, "I have won, by the Lord of the Ka'bah!"[164]

Amir Ibn al-Tufayl then called upon the whole tribe of Banu Amir to help him in attacking the remaining Muslim envoys. However, they refused, saying, "We will not defend Abu Bara' (Amir Ibn Malik)!" Consequently, he sought help from the tribes of Sulaym, such as 'Usayyah, Ra'l and Dhakwan who, responding to his plea, set out and surrounded the Muslim envoys at their campsite. When the Muslims saw their attackers, they took up their swords and fought them. However, they were killed to the last man.

Two of the envoys did not witness this treacherous incident; one of them, 'Amr Ibn Umayyah al-™imri, did not know of it until later. When the two of them set out to defend their brethren, 'Amr's companion was killed as well. 'Amr then fled and returned to Medina; on his way there, he encountered two non-Muslims and killed them, thinking that they belonged to the tribe of Banu Amir. When he reached the Messenger of God (pbuh) and told him what had happened, it became apparent that they had belonged to the tribe of Banu Kilab, and that the Prophet (pbuh) had taken them under his protection.

He (pbuh) then said, "You have killed two men for whose bloodwit I must take responsibility."

The Prophet (pbuh) was distressed by the deaths of these righteous envoys, and for a month thereafter, he devoted himself to morning prayers in which he called down affliction upon the tribes of Sulaym: Ra'l, Dhakwan, Banu Lihyan, and 'Usayyah.[165]

Lessons and Principles

These two moving incidents offer important lessons which we may summarize as follows: First, the conflicts which took place at al-Raji' and Bi'r Ma'unah tell us that all Muslims - not only God's prophets and messengers and the scholars of Islam who have succeeded them - have a responsibility to call others to Islam, enabling them to perceive its truth and bow to its precepts.

The importance of fulfilling this mission may be seen in the Prophet's decision to send out no fewer than seventy young reciters of the Qur'an whom he (pbuh) knew to be among his choicest Companions, despite the fact that not long before this, six other Muslim emissaries whom he (pbuh) had sent out for the very same purpose had been killed. The Prophet (pbuh) was afraid for these men, as he mentioned to Amir Ibn Malik when he proposed that he (pbuh) send out a delegation to call people to the Islamic religion. However, he saw that undertaking the burdens of communicating the message of Islam was more important than anything else. Hence, if the only way in which to accomplish this task was to undertake such a risk, accepting whatever consequences it might bring, then so be it, since in so doing, they would be carrying out God's command and delivering His message.

Second, as we mentioned in Section One above, it is not permissible for a Muslim to reside in "the abode of war," that is, in a place ruled by non-Muslims, if it is not possible for him to practice his religion openly there; in fact, even if it is possible for him to do so, it remains undesirable. However, this scene from the Prophet's life indicates that an exception is made to this principle if the purpose for the Muslim's living in such a place is to propagate the teachings of Islam. This, after all, is viewed as one form of jihad, the responsibility for which is borne by all Muslims on the basis of what is termed fard kifayah, that is, a collective duty which, if some Muslims perform it, it is equivalent to all having performed it; if, however, no one performs it, then all Muslims share alike in the resultant guilt.[166]

Third: If we overlook the animosity and ill will which these two incidents show to have filled the hearts of the polytheists toward the Muslims -- an antipathy which was so intense that they allowed themselves to engage in the basest sort of treachery in order to satisfy their lust for revenge – we will discover the extent to which the very opposite disposition was found among the Muslims who perished as victims of such treachery and hatred. We have seen, for example, how Khubayb, may God be pleased with him, was held captive among the Banu al-Harith to await his execution. We have also seen how he obtained a metal blade with which to spruce up his appearance and cleanse himself in preparation for death, and how a baby boy went toddling over to him while his mother was otherwise occupied. Now if Khubayb had been someone who clung to his earthly life and was thinking of how he could avenge himself on his captors, this moment would have been the ideal opportunity to strike a bargain or to requite perfidy with perfidy. This, at least, was the way everyone in the household would have expected him to behave. Hence, the minute the child's mother noticed that her little boy had gone over toward Khubayb, she jumped up in a fright to rescue him from certain death! However, she stopped in amazement when she saw that Khubayb had sat him in his lap and was caressing him like a nurturing father! Khubayb looked at her and, aware of her dismay, said, "Were you afraid that I would kill him? I would never do that, so help me God!"

Behold the miracle which can be wrought by Islamic instruction in human beings' lives! Khubayb and the rancorous polytheists who sought to put him to a violent, unmerited death were all Arabs who had grown up in a single land, and who had been raised on the same traditions and ways of thinking. However, Khubayb had embraced Islam, which had turned him into a new person, whereas these other men had clung to their errant ways, thereby remaining prisoners to their brutal, perfidious natures. Thus, one can see what tremendous power Islam has to transform human nature!

Fourth: It may be concluded from the foregoing that the Muslim who is held captive by non-Muslims may decline to accept offers of protection, refusing – as Asim Ibn Thabit did -- to give others power over him even if he is killed as a result, lest he be under the rule of someone who denies the truth. If, on the other hand, he wishes to accept such protection, he may do so and – like Khubayb and Zayd -- await the opportunity to obtain his freedom. However, if such a captive is able to flee, he should do so, even if it is possible for him to practice his religion openly among his captors, because so long as a Muslim remains a captive among those who deny the truth, he or she will be oppressed and humiliated; hence, it is his duty to free himself from the humiliation and slavery of captivity.[167]

Fifth: If we ponder the reply made by Zayd Ibn al-Dathinah to Abu Sufyan just before he was put to death, we will realize what a great love for the Messenger of God (pbuh) filled the hearts of his Companions. There is no doubt that this love is one of the most important reasons for their willingness to exert any effort and make any sacrifice necessary to promote the religion of God Almighty and defend His Messenger (pbuh). No matter how far a Muslim progresses in faith, his or her faith will remain incomplete so long as this kind of love for the Prophet (pbuh) is missing. It is this fact which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was expressing when he said, "None of you believes until I have become dearer to him than his parents, his children, and all people."[168]

Sixth: The account we narrated above concerning Khubayb's days as a captive in Mecca serves as evidence that any action which is considered a miracle on the part of a prophet may likewise be classified as a miracle when performed by a saint. There is only one fundamental distinction between the two, namely, that the miracles performed by a prophet are always accompanied by a challenge and the claim to prophethood, whereas the miracles of the saints and other righteous individuals come about spontaneously, as it were, without being associated with any sort of challenge. This is the view shared by the majority of the Sunnites, and there is no more compelling evidence in its favor than the sound hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and others concerning the miracle with which God honored Khubayb not long before he was slain.

Seventh: Some might wonder what wisdom there could have been in allowing traitorous enemies to gain the upper hand over the believing young men who had gone out solely in obedience to the command of God and His Apostle (pbuh). Why, we might ask, did God not give them power over their enemies? The answer to this question is, as we have mentioned on more than one occasion, that God has mandated His servants to accomplish two purposes: (1) to establish an Islamic society, and (2) to proceed toward this end along a thorny, rugged path. The wisdom in this is that in this manner, believers learn the true meaning of humble worship and servitude to God Almighty, while those whose faith is sincere are sifted out from among those who are mere hypocrites. God chooses some to be His witnesses through death, and in this way we see the practical meaning of the pledge of allegiance which was exchanged between God and His believing servants. God declares, "Verily, God has purchased of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return, (and so) they fight in God's cause, and slay, and are slain" (Qur'an 9: 111).

After all, what point would there have been in signing such a covenant if its contents had been nothing but an illusion which would never be fulfilled? And what value would there have been in it unless, by means of signing it, its signatories would win paradise and eternal bliss?

Such a question only arises in the minds of those who place too much importance on this transient earthly life; this, in turn, is the sign of a faith in God which is either weak or entirely lacking. Those who suffer from this condition would not be expected to risk either their lives or their wealth for the sake of God and His Apostle (pbuh). And as for those whose faith is genuine, the problem simply would not occur to them in the first place, since they possess the certainty that the pleasures of this earthly life are too insignificant to prevent the Muslim from performing even the most mundane act of obedience by means of which he might draw nearer to his Maker. Similarly, the sacrifice of one's life is, to such believers, merely a means to obtain release from the prison of this world and entry into the bliss of the hereafter – every Muslim's most cherished hope.

This sentiment is expressed most clearly in the words uttered by Khubayb just prior to his death, especially the final line of poetry in which he says, "No reverence or fear of the enemy shall I evince, for God is my refuge and my place of return."

The Eviction of Banu al-Nadir

Ibn Sa'd narrates that one Saturday in the month of Rabi' I, 4 A.H., the Messenger of God (pbuh) went out and prayed in the Quba' Mosque with a group of his Companions, some of them Emigrants and some of them Helpers. Then he went to speak with Banu al-Nadir, asking them to assist him in paying the bloodwit for the two men of the tribe of Kilab who had been killed by 'Amr Ibn Umayyah al-Dimri and who had been under the Prophet's protection. According to Ibn Ishaq and others, there was an alliance between the Banu al-Nadir and the Banu Amir.[169]

They replied, saying, "We will do as you wish, Abu al-Qasim." Then they went off to consult in private, with some of them plotting treachery.

While the Prophet (pbuh) was standing beside the wall of a house, one of them by the name of 'Amr Ibn Jahhash al-Nadari said, "I will go up to the rooftop and throw a large stone down on top of him."

Ibn Sa'd adds that Salam Ibn Mishkam (a Jew of the tribe of Banu al-Nadir) said to them, "Do not do it. God will surely be aware of what you plan to do, and it will mean the abrogation of the covenant between us and him."[170]

News of what the Jews were planning to do reached the Messenger of God (pbuh). Hence, rising quickly as though he needed something, he headed back to Medina. His Companions came after him, saying, "You got up so quickly, we didn't know you were gone!"

"Some of the Jews were about to do something treacherous, and God informed me of the matter, so I got up."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then sent to Banu al-Nadir, saying, "You have plotted treason against me, so depart from my country. I will give you ten days to leave, but after that, anyone still found here will be put to death."

Hence, they prepared themselves to leave. However, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul sent the Jews a message, saying, "Do not leave your homes; rather, stay in your fort. I have two thousand men from my own tribe and other tribes who are prepared to fight on your behalf."

So they went back on their intention to leave and secured themselves instead inside their citadels. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) learned of this, he ordered that preparations be made to go to war against them. By the time the Messenger of God (pbuh) marched out against Banu al-Nadir, they had fortified themselves inside their strongholds with arrows and stones. However, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul failed to make good on his promise to them and they were surrounded by the Prophet (pbuh), who gave instructions for their palm trees to be cut down and destroyed.[171]

"O Muhammad!" they cried out, "You used to forbid such destruction and condemn those who engaged in it. So why have you cut down and burned our palm trees?"

It was then that the following Qur'anic verse was revealed: "Whatever (of their) palm trees you may have

cut down, (O believers,) or left standing on their roots, was (done) by God's leave, and in order that He might disgrace the disobedient" (Qur'an 59: 5).

The Jews then proposed that they leave Medina as the Prophet (pbuh) had commanded them to. However, he (pbuh) replied, "I will allow you to do so, but only on the condition that you take nothing but that which can be carried on the backs of your camels. Nor may you take your weapons."

Agreeing to these conditions, the Jews proceeded to load their camels with everything they could carry. Ibn Hisham tells us that, "The men tore down their dwellings to nothing but the door lintels, placed them on their camels' backs, and set off. They scattered in the area between Khaybar and Syria, and none of them embraced Islam except for two men: Yamin Ibn 'Umayr Ibn Ka'b, the paternal cousin of 'Amr Ibn Jahhash, and Abu Sa'd Ibn Wahb, both of whom regained their possessions. [172]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) divided the resulting wealth among the Emigrants only, and of the Helpers, he gave some to two men of whom he had heard that they were in special need, namely, Sahl Ibn Hanif, and Abu Dujanah Sammak Ibn Kharashah. However, all of the wealth collected from Banu al-Nadir belonged solely to the Messenger of God (pbuh). Al-Baladhuri mentions in his Futuh al-Buldan that he (pbuh) planted (various crops) under the palm trees on their land, which enabled him to lay by stores for his children and his wives for one year; then he (pbuh) used what remained to obtain horses and arms.[173] The entire 59th Chapter of the Qur'an, entitled "The Gathering," was revealed in connection with Banu al-Nadir; the following verses were revealed in comment upon the policy which the Prophet (pbuh) adopted with respect to the division of their wealth:

Yet (remember:) Whatever (spoils taken) from the enemy God has turned over to His Apostle, you did not have to spur horse or riding camel for its sake: but God gives his apostles mastery over whomever He wills – for God has the power to will anything. Whatever (spoils taken) from the people of those villages God has turned over to His Apostle – (all of it) belongs to God and the Apostle, and the near of kin (of deceased believers), and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, so that it may not be (a benefit) going round and round among such of you as may (already) be rich. Hence, accept (willingly) whatever the Apostle gives you (thereof), and refrain from (demanding) anything that he withholds from you; and remain conscious of God: for, verily, God is severe in retribution (Qur'an 59: 6-7).

Lessons and Principles

This is the second example we have seen of the Jews' treacherous tendencies. We have seen above how this same propensity was exhibited by the Jewish tribe of Banu Qaynuqa'. This is a historical fact which has been confirmed by innumerable events, and it is the secret behind the divine curse upon them which is recorded in the Book of God Almighty, where we read, "Those among the children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed (God) and were ever transgressing beyond the bounds of what is right" (Qur'an 5: 78).

This incident also offers profound lessons concerning numerous aspects of Islamic law, which we may sum up as follows:

First: The Prophet's divinely granted awareness of the treason which the Jews had been plotting against him is one of the numerous miracles with which God honored His Messenger (pbuh) both prior to and during his prophetic mission. As such, it should serve to increase our faith in his prophethood and his message; it should also help to deepen our conviction that his "prophetic persona," as it were, was the primary foundation for his other personal qualities and, indeed, his very existence.

Some of those who have written about the Prophet's biography and the principles to be derived therefrom

have described the divine disclosure of the Jews' intentions which descended upon the Prophet (pbuh) as a kind of "inspiration." However, the word "inspiration" refers to a sense which is possessed in common by virtually all people, operating as it does on the basis of various sorts of signals and evidence; whereas the term, "divine disclosure" (khabar ilahi) as it is employed by scholars of the Prophetic biography refers to a quality which is associated exclusively with those possessed of a prophetic mission. We know that it was this quality in particular which enabled the Prophet (pbuh) to perceive the duplicity which was at work in this situation, and that it took place in fulfillment of God's promise to him expressed in the words, "And God will protect you from mankind" (Qur'an 5: 67).

Why, then, should we describe this event in a manner which misrepresents its true nature? To do so is tantamount to denying the Prophet's miracles, which – once they have been confirmed on the basis of authentic, indisputable hadiths – merely reveals a weakness in one's faith in his prophethood.

Second: The cutting down and burning of Banu al-Nadir's palm trees is an event which has been confirmed based on agreed-upon hadiths. What the Prophet (pbuh) did was to destroy some of the trees and leave the rest standing. The following Qur'anic verse was revealed in affirmation of what he (pbuh) had done, saying, "Whatever of their palm trees you may have cut down (O believers) or left standing on their roots, was (done by God's leave, and in order that He might confound the iniquitous" (Qur'an 59: 5).

Most Muslim scholars have concluded on this basis that the Islamic injunction as it pertains to destroying an enemy's trees is dependent upon what the imam or the military commander deems necessary to inflict sufficient harm on the enemy to deter them from further aggression against the Muslims. The issue, then, falls under the rubric of Islamic legal policy; hence, the scholars hold that the Prophet's intention in what he (pbuh) did to the palm trees, whether by destroying or preserving them, was to achieve the Muslims' best interest and to provide guidance for those imams who would succeed him (pbuh).

On this same basis al-Shafi'i, may God have mercy upon him, explained the command given by Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, to cut and burn when he sent Khalid to Tulayhah and Banu Tamim even though he himself had forbidden this very thing in his wars on Syria. He states, "Perhaps this command by Abu Bakr to refrain from cutting down fruit-bearing trees was on account of the fact that he had heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) predicting that Syria would be conquered by the Muslims. Hence, even though it would have been permissible for him either to have cut them down or to spare them, he chose to spare them in view of what would best serve the Muslims' interests."[174]

The view that it is permissible to cut down and burn trees belonging to those who deny the truth if this is required by the Muslims' best interests is held by Nafi' Mawlá Ibn 'Umar, Malik, al-Thawri, Abu Hanifah, al-Shafi'i, Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal), Ishaq, and most other scholars of jurisprudence. However, al-Layth Ibn Sa'd, Abu Thawr, and al-Awza'i hold it to be impermissible.[175]

Third: Muslim scholars agree that the spoils obtained by Muslims from their enemies without armed conflict are to be disposed of however the Muslim leader sees fit based on the Muslims' collective interest, and that they are not to be distributed among fighters in the Muslim army as are the spoils which have been obtained through warfare. The basis for this view is the policy adopted by the Prophet (pbuh) with respect to the division of the spoils obtained from Banu al-Nadir. As we have seen, he (pbuh) set these spoils aside for the Emigrants only (with the exception of the two Helpers mentioned earlier), after which the Qur'anic verse mentioned above (59: 6) was revealed in confirmation of what he (pbuh) had done.

However, there has been disagreement concerning the land gained by Muslims through warfare. In Malik's view, land should not be divided under any circumstances; rather, the land tax collected therefrom should be set aside as a religious endowment to be employed in the service of the Muslims'

public interest. However, if the imam believes that division of the land is necessary in order to serve this interest, it is permissible. Abu Hanifah held a similar view on this question. However, al-Shafi'i held that land taken by force must be divided in the same manner as all other spoils of war; this is the view which appears to have been held by Imam Ahmad as well.

The evidence in support of al-Shafi'i's view is that the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) disposed of the wealth taken from Banu al-Nadir, as opposed to a division among those who had fought in a war, was due to the fact that this wealth had been obtained without any fighting having taken place. This is set forth in the following Qur'anic verse, in which God explains the ruling made by the Prophet (pbuh) on the spoils taken from Banu al-Nadir, saying, "Whatever (spoils taken) from the enemy God has turned over to His Apostle, you did not have to spur horse or riding camel for its sake: but God gives his apostles mastery over whomever He wills – for God has the power to will anything" (59: 6).

If, then, this is the basis for the permissibility of not dividing land which has been gained without fighting, it follows that if the basis itself is removed – in other words, if it has been gained through armed conflict -- the ruling ceases to apply and the spoils are to be treated as they would otherwise, be they land or anything else.

There are numerous considerations which support the position taken by Malik and Abu Hanifah. One of the most important of these is the fact that 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, refrained from dividing the rural, agricultural land of Iraq, choosing instead to set it aside as a religious endowment the land taxes on which would go to aid the Muslims. Space does not permit us to offer more than a brief overview of this matter; however, what must be noted here is the explanation provided by God in the Qur'anic passage which clarifies the Prophet's policy pertaining to the division of the spoils obtained from Banu al-Nadir, since he (pbuh) earmarked them for a specific group of people and excluded others. As we have noted above, God Almighty explains this matter, saying, "so that it may not be (a benefit) going round and round among such of you as may (already) be rich... ," in other words, in order that the distribution of wealth among the Muslims not be restricted solely to the wealthy class.

These words make it clear that as it pertains to matters of wealth. Islamic law is based in its entirety upon the fulfillment of this principle, and that the aim behind all Islamic legal rulings related to money and the economy is the establishment of a just society in which there is a closing of the gaps among the various social classes which could hinder the execution of justice. If we were to apply the rulings of Islamic law and its distinctive systems as they relate to wealth, including the revival of zakah, the prohibition of usury, and doing away with the various types of monopoly, we would find that virtually everyone could live comfortably. In such a situation, there might be disparities among people's incomes; however, everyone would have enough, and there would be a spirit of cooperation among all.

What it is important for us to know is that when God Almighty in His wisdom sets forth a law whose aim is the establishment of such a society in this world, He ordains specific means which He has mandated us to adhere to without deviation. In other words, God Almighty has provided us with both the end and the means together. Hence, it cannot be said, for example: Islam's aim is to establish social justice, so let us adopt whatever means and methods we find most suitable to achieve this end. Rather, this approach is a violation of both the end and the means, for we will only be able to achieve the end which God has commanded us to pursue by adopting those means which God has ordained for us. The events of history itself provide the most eloquent witness to the truth of this principle.

This being said, readers would do well to refer back to the entire 59th Chapter of the Qur'an, reflecting on the commentary contained in the magnificent divine revelation on all elements of this incident: the Jews and the hypocrites, the Apostle's policy on money and war, and so on. This, of all the chapters of the

Qur'an, will most thoroughly acquaint you with the lessons and admonitions offered by this story.

The Expedition of the Rags
(Dhat al-Riqa‘)

According to most scholars of the Prophet’s biography, this expedition took place in the year 4 A.H., about one month after the evacuation of Banu al-Nadir, although al-Bukhari and some other narrators and scholars of the Prophetic hadiths hold that it probably took place following the Battle of Khaybar (in Muharram, 7 A.H.).

The reason for this expedition was the treachery which had been committed against the Muslims by many of the tribes of Najd. This breach of faith was made manifest in the murders of the seventy Muslim emissaries who had gone forth to call others to the worship of God Almighty. After placing Medina under the authority of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, may God be pleased with him, the Prophet (pbuh) set out against the tribes of Muharib and Banu Tha‘lab and, once having entered Najd, he (pbuh) encamped in a spot called Nakhl, in the land of Ghatafan. However, despite the fact that, according to Ibn Hisham, their numbers were quite large, God struck such terror in the hearts of these tribes that they scattered and fled, and no battle took place.

Even so, the story of this expedition contains scenes which merit our attention for the lessons which they offer, and it is these scenes to which we now turn:

One: Muslim and al-Bukhari both narrate the following on the authority of Abu Musá al-Ash‘ari, may God be pleased with him:

A group of six of us went out with the Messenger of God (pbuh) on an expedition, and we had one camel among us which we took turns riding. (After having covered some distance in this manner,) our feet were wounded and bleeding, and my toenails had fallen off. So we began wrapping our feet with rags, which is where this expedition derived its name.

It bears noting that Abu Musá regretted having relating this account, since in so doing he had made known the good work he had performed.

Two: It is narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim that during this expedition, the Prophet (pbuh) performed what is known as “the prayer of fear.” One group of men lined up with him for prayer, while the other faced the enemy. He (pbuh) prayed one cycle of prayer with the group that had lined up with him, then he remained standing while they completed one cycle by themselves. This group then went to line up facing the enemy, while the other group came and the Prophet (pbuh) prayed with them the remaining cycle of his prayer. He then remained seated while they completed this cycle for themselves, after which he concluded with the prayer for blessings upon Abraham.[176]

Three: Al-Bukhari also relates the following on the authority of Jabir, may God be pleased with him, who said that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) returned from the expedition, he (Jabir) returned with him. When it came time for them to take an afternoon nap, they were in a valley filled with thorn trees. The Messenger of God (pbuh) dismounted while the others went in search of shade and, stopping under an acacia tree, he (pbuh) hung his sword on it. Jabir says,

We had all gone to sleep for a while. Then suddenly we heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) calling to us. So we came over to where he was, and what should we find but a Bedouin Arab sitting with him.

The Prophet (pbuh) then told us, 'This man slipped my sword out of its scabbard while I was asleep, and I woke up to find him with a drawn sword in his hand.'

"Who is there to protect you from me?" he asked.

"God," I told him, "And here he sits."

However, the Messenger of God (pbuh) did nothing to punish the man."[177]

Four: Ibn Ishaq and Ahmad relate the following on the authority of Jabir, may God be pleased with him, who said:

When we went out with the Messenger of God (pbuh) on the "Expedition of the Rags," one of the women belonging to the polytheists was wounded. As the Prophet (pbuh) was leaving to return home, her husband, who had been absent, came back, swearing that he would shed the blood of some of Muhammad's companions. He then went in pursuit of the Prophet (pbuh). When the Prophet (pbuh) stopped to set up camp, he asked, "Who of you will stand guard for us tonight?"

Two men, one an Emigrant and the other a Helper, volunteered, saying, "We will, O Messenger of God."[178]

"Stay, then, at the head of the mountain pass," he (pbuh) said, whereupon he and his Companions went down into the pass.

When the two men had gone up to the mouth of the pass, the Helper asked the Emigrant, "Which part of the night would you like me to stand guard – the first part, or the last?"

"Stand watch for me during the first part," he replied.

So the Emigrant lay down and went to sleep, while the Helper stayed up and prayed. Meanwhile, a man (from the enemy) came and, seeing the Helper, recognized him to be standing guard for his people. So he shot him with an arrow. However, the Helper simply removed the arrow and went on praying. The man shot him with a second arrow, and the Helper remained standing in place. The man then shot him with a third arrow and, once again, the Helper just pulled it out. Then, after performing a genuflection and a prostration, he awakened his companion and said, "Sit up, for I have been shot through with arrows."

The Emigrant jumped up, and when the man saw both the Helper and the Emigrant, he knew that he had been discovered, so he fled.

Moreover, once the Emigrant saw how the Helper was bleeding, he cried, "For Heaven's sake! Why didn't you wake me up when he first shot you?"

The Helper replied, "I was reciting a certain chapter of the Qur'an and I didn't want to interrupt it. So when the man kept shooting at me, I did a genuflection and woke you up. But were if not for my fear of losing a frontier which the Messenger of God (pbuh) had commanded me to protect, I'd sooner cut off my own soul than cut short my recitation!"[179]

Five: The following account is narrated by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Sa'd in his Tabaqat, and Ibn Hisham in his Sirah on the authority of Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah, who said:

When I went out with the Messenger of God (pbuh) on "the Expedition of the Rags," I was riding a weak camel of mine. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) set out to return home, his companions departed as well. As for me, I began lagging behind.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then came after me, saying, "What's wrong, Jabir?"

"O Messenger of God, this camel of mine is slowing me down."

"Have him kneel down," he (pbuh) told me. So I had him kneel, and the Messenger of God did the same for his camel.

Then he (pbuh) said to me, "Give me that stick in your hand."

So I handed it to him, and he prodded my camel with it several times, then said, "Get on."

So I got on and – by the One who sent him in truth! – it took off as if it were in a race with its she-camel.

As I was speaking after this with the Messenger of God (pbuh), he said to me, "Will you sell me your camel, Jabir?"

"No!" I replied, "but I will give it to you, O Messenger of God!"

"No," he (pbuh) said, "I want you to sell it to me."

So I said, "Then name me a price, O Messenger of God."

"I'll buy it from you for one dirhem," he (pbuh) said.

"No," I said, "you would be wronging me if you did that."

"Two dirhems, then?"

"No," I said.

In this manner, the Messenger of God (pbuh) kept raising the price for me until it had reached forty dirhems.

Then I said, "Are you satisfied, O Messenger of God?"

"Yes, I am," he (pbuh) replied.

"It's yours, then."

"Fine," he (pbuh) said.

Then he (pbuh) asked, "Jabir, are you married yet?"

"Yes, I am, O Messenger of God."

"Was she married previously, or is she a virgin?"

"She's been married before," I told him.

"Wouldn't you like to have a slave girl to amuse yourself with?" he (pbuh) asked me.

"O Messenger of God," I replied, "my father was killed at the Battle of Uhud and left seven daughters behind. So I married a mature woman who could keep them together and take good care of them."

"You have chosen correctly, God willing," he (pbuh) said. "When we get to Sirar,[180] let us call for a slaughter camel to be sacrificed. We will stay there for one day, and when she (your wife) hears of our approach, she will shake the dust out of her cushions (in preparation for your arrival)."

"I swear to you, O Messenger of God, we have no cushions!"

"But you will," he (pbuh) replied, "so when you arrive home, conduct yourself in a seemly manner."

When we arrived in Sirar, the Messenger of God (pbuh) called for a slaughter camel to be sacrificed and we stayed there that day. Then when night fell, he (pbuh) went on into Medina, and we went with him.

The next morning, I took the camel to the Prophet's house and had it kneel at his door. Then I went and sat in the mosque nearby. When the Prophet (pbuh) came out and saw the camel, he said, "What is this?"

"It's a camel that Jabir brought," they told him.

"And where is Jabir?" he (pbuh) asked.

I was then called to come to see him (pbuh), and he said to me, "O son of my brother, take your camel. It belongs to you!"

Then he called Bilal and said to him, "Take Jabir and give him forty dirhems."

So I went with Bilal and he gave me forty dirhems plus a bit more. And that camel is still with me, growing and making himself at home in our house![181]

Lessons and Principles

In the paragraphs which follow, we offer a brief report on the history of "The Expedition of the Rags":

As we have noted, most scholars of the Prophetic biography agree that this battle took place in the year 4 A.H., prior to the Battle of Khaybar and after the confrontation with Banu al-Nadir while some of them, such as Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hibban, hold that it took place in 5 A.H. Al-Bukhari states in his Sahih that it did not take place until after the Battle of Khaybar; however, he places this same event prior to Khaybar in the order of events which he narrates in his book!

Al-Hafié Ibn Hajar favors al-Bukhari's stated view, basing it on the fact that by the time the "Expedition of the Rags" took place, the prayer of fear had been established as legitimate even though the Prophet (pbuh) did not pray it in the Battle of the Trench (in 5 A.H.) but rather, prayed a compensatory prayer later. Further evidence cited by al-Hafié Ibn Hajar is related to the hadith narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Musá al-Ash'ari, in which he describes how their feet were so lacerated that they wrapped them in rags, which was why the event came to be called, "The Expedition of the Rags," since Abu Musá al-Ash'ari did not return from Ethiopia until after the Battle of Khaybar. In light of such evidence as this, Ibn al-Qayyim judged the matter to be ambiguous, saying, "This indicates that the Expedition of the Rags may have taken place after the Battle of the Trench."[182]

However, I hold that this expedition must have taken place prior to the Battle of the Trench, since it is recorded by both Muslim and al-Bukhari that during the Battle of the Trench, Jabir, may God be pleased with him, requested permission from the Apostle (pbuh) to go home, and that when he reached his house, he informed his wife of the hunger being suffered by the Messenger of God (pbuh). We read in connection with this event that Jabir invited both the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions to a meal at his home, and that the Prophet (pbuh) told Jabir's wife, "You eat some of it and give the rest away, for my men are famine-stricken." It is also recorded in both Sahih Muslim and Sahih al-Bukhari that during the Expedition of the Rags, the Messenger of God (pbuh) asked Jabir if he was married yet, to which he replied, "Yes, O Messenger of God... " In other words, the Prophet (pbuh) did not yet know at that time about Jabir's marriage, which is a clear indication that the Expedition of the Rags occurred before both the Battle of the Trench and the Battle of Khaybar. I have never encountered anyone who cites this hadith as evidence that the Battle of the Confederates occurred later than the Expedition of the Rags. Nor have I

encountered anyone who responds to this evidence among those who make the opposite claim. Be that as it may, it serves as nearly irrefutable confirmation of what we are saying.

In reply to the argument presented by al-Hafié Ibn Hajar based on the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) did not pray the prayer of fear during the Battle of the Trench but, instead, prayed a compensatory prayer later, it may be noted that what led the Prophet (pbuh) to delay prayer in this situation was the continuous exchange of arrows between the polytheists and the Muslims such that there was no opportunity to retreat for prayer. In addition, the enemy may have been between the Muslims and the qiblah, whereas when the prayer of fear was performed during the Expedition of the Rags, this was not the case. Or perhaps he (pbuh) delayed the prayer precisely in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of making up for a prayer missed.

As for the argument which al-Hafié Ibn Hajar bases on the hadith attributed to Abu Musá al-Ash'ari, a reply to it may be found in the possibility – which has been observed by numerous scholars of the Prophet's biography – that in this particular hadith, Abu Musá al-Ash'ari was speaking of some other expedition which was also referred to as "The Expedition of the Rags." Favoring such a possibility is the fact that he said, "We went out on an expedition with the Messenger of God (pbuh). There were six of us, and we had one camel which we took turns riding," whereas the Expedition of the Rags of which we have been speaking involved a larger number of men than this. Al-Hafié Ibn Hajar, may God have mercy on him, attempted to respond to this observation; however, there was no need to do so, especially given the fact that the hadiths attributed to Jabir concerning both these expeditions have been conclusively confirmed by scholars of the Prophetic biography.

As for the Prophet's having delayed certain prayers until after the Battle of the Trench was over, we shall devote a detailed discussion to this and related rulings and precepts in their proper context, God willing.

As we have noted, this expedition involved no actual armed conflict between the Muslims and the polytheists. Nevertheless, it includes scenes of such great significance that they deserve to be studied and learned from. We have mentioned five such scenes, which together make up a summary of the expedition's major events. In what follows, we shall discuss the morals that can be derived from each of these:

First: The account narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Musá al-Ash'ari in explanation of why this, or some other, expedition, was referred to as "The Expedition of the Rags" presents a vivid picture of the suffering endured by the Companions of the Messenger of God (pbuh) for the sake of delivering the message of their Lord and striving on His behalf. The scene described by Abu Musá makes it clear that they were so poor that they lacked even a mount on which to ride out to battle, the result being that six or seven men had to take turns riding a single camel on a long, arduous journey. However, poverty could not hinder them from carrying out their mission, namely, that of calling others to God and striving for His sake. In faithfulness to this mandate they endured all manner of suffering: Their feet were lacerated from walking such a long distance through deep sand and thorns, their toenails fell off from striking up against pebbles and stones, and their feet ended up so raw that they could do nothing but wrap them in layer upon layer of rags! Even so, they did not flag or surrender; on the contrary, they esteemed lightly all such tribulations, focusing their sights instead upon the magnitude of the divine burden which had been placed about their necks from the time they had become Muslims. In this manner, they gave concrete expression to the words of the divine revelation: "Verily, God has purchased of the believers their lives and their possessions, and the price that is theirs shall be Paradise. They fight in God's cause, so they slay and are slain" (Qur'an 9: 111).

Moreover, Abu Musá al-Ash'ari, may God be pleased with him, was unhappy with himself for having unwittingly spoken of this matter when he was asked why this expedition had been named "The Expedition

of the Rags," because in so doing, he had let others know of a righteous act for which he had hoped for a reward from God Almighty. According to Imam al-Nawawi, what this tells us is that it is considered praiseworthy for a Muslim to conceal his good works and the hardships which he endures for the sake of obedience to God. He or she is not to deliberately reveal such acts of righteousness unless there is a particular benefit to be derived therefrom, for example, the clarification of a precept relating to such an act, encouragement of others to do likewise, and so forth. It is in this manner that we are to understand the reports of some of the righteous Muslim forefathers concerning good works which they had performed.[183]

Second: The manner in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) prayed together with a group of his Companions during this expedition provides the basis for the legitimacy of what is referred to as "the prayer of fear." There are two ways in which this prayer may be performed. The first applies to situations in which the enemy is located between those praying and the qiblah; in the second, the enemy is not thus located. It is this second situation which applies to the prayer which the Prophet (pbuh) performed during the Expedition of the Rags. When the time for prayer arrived, the enemy was scattered in several directions around the Muslims, and there was the fear that, if all the Muslims were seen to have moved back from their positions to pray, the enemy might take traitorous advantage of the situation and come at them with their swords.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) commenced the prayer with one group of his Companions while their brethren kept surveillance over the enemy in the various directions where they were positioned. When the Prophet (pbuh) had completed half his prayer, that is, one cycle of prayer,[184] those who had been praying behind him hastened to complete the second cycle of prayer on their own while the Prophet (pbuh) stood poised at the beginning of his second cycle. They then went to replace their brethren in their fighting positions, allowing the latter to come and pray behind the Prophet (pbuh) as he completed his second cycle. This second group then rose and prayed a second cycle on their own while the Prophet (pbuh) sat waiting for them. And finally, they recited the prayer's concluding phrases together with him (pbuh).

This form of the prayer was rendered necessary by two considerations: (1) the aim of having them all follow the Prophet's lead in communal prayer, which is a virtue to be pursued whenever possible; and (2) the preferability of the group being united as much as possible. That is to say, to have divided the men into numerous groups to perform the required prayer in succession would have been undesirable unless it had been absolutely necessary. The adherents of the Hanafi school recognize only the first consideration; consequently, they hold that there was no justification for maintaining the legitimacy of this sort of prayer subsequent to the death of the Prophet (pbuh).

Third: The story of the polytheist who took the Prophet's sword while he was asleep under the tree is, as we have seen, a sound hadith. Moreover, it reveals the extent to which the Creator, may His majesty be exalted, cared for and preserved His Prophet (pbuh). As such, it can serve to increase our certainty of the miracles which God wrought on his behalf; and this, in turn, may give us a more vivid perception of his prophetic persona. It would have been ever so simple and natural for this polytheist, once he had taken the sword and held it poised over the Prophet (pbuh) – who was unarmed and sound asleep – to bring it down on his head and kill him. This man's complacence and the pride which he took in this golden opportunity to wield power over the Messenger of God (pbuh) are evident in his question, "Who will protect you from me?!" What, then, happened after this to prevent him from carrying out his intention? What happened – which this polytheist would never have anticipated or planned for – was the intervention of God's providential protection over His Prophet (pbuh). This divine protection was sufficient to strike terror in the man's heart and send tremors through his forearms; then, with the sword having slipped out of his grasp, he sat politely before the Prophet (pbuh) with his gaze cast downward.

The most important thing to realize based on this incident is that this is the confirmation of the words, "And God will protect you from mankind" (Qur'an 5: 67). The protection referred to in this verse does not mean that the Prophet (pbuh) would not be hurt or suffer tribulation at the hands of his people; on the contrary, these experiences are common to all of God's servants. Rather, what is meant here is that no attempt to assassinate him (pbuh) and, in so doing, to do away with the Islamic message which he had been sent to deliver, would be allowed to touch him.

Fourth: We have included the account of the conversation which took place between Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah and the Messenger of God (pbuh) on their way back to Medina -- despite the fact that it bears no connection to the expedition being discussed here -- because of the vivid, authentic picture which it gives us of the Prophet's gracious manner of relating to his Companions, including his gentle companionship, his amiable, jocular conversation, and his intense love for his comrades.

When we give careful thought to this story, we realize that the Prophet (pbuh) was moved by the adversity which had struck Jabir's household. His father having been martyred in the Battle of Uhud, and he being the eldest son, Jabir had undertaken the responsibility of caring for the numerous younger siblings which his father had left behind. Consequently, he was poverty-stricken, with little in the way of worldly possessions or comforts. As Jabir lagged behind the others on account of his one and only weak camel, the Messenger of God (pbuh) became all the more aware of his neediness. Hence, as it was his custom whenever he (pbuh) traveled with his comrades to check up on all of them from time to time and reassure himself of their well-being, the Prophet (pbuh) took advantage of this opportunity: Lagging behind himself until he met up with Jabir, he (pbuh) began consoling him in his own gentle, witty fashion while no one else was around.

As they spoke, he (pbuh) offered to buy Jabir's camel. What he wished to do, of course, was to use this as an occasion to honor Jabir and to lend him assistance toward coping with the situation in which he found himself. With the same gentle wit, he (pbuh) asked him about his wife and his house, reassuring the newly wed husband that they would soon arrive in Medina and spend a few hours there, just long enough for the city's inhabitants to hear of their return and make ready to receive them. Among them, of course, would be his wife who, as soon as she heard of his arrival, would fix herself up for him and get the house ready, decorating here and there and getting out the cushions for him to recline on. Carried along with the Prophet's buoyant mood, Jabir said, "But I swear to you, O Messenger of God, we have no cushions!" To which the latter (pbuh) replied, "But you will!"

What a marvelous depiction of his unselfish camaraderie, his intimate manner of conversing, and the sweet sense of humor which permeated his conversations with his friends! We were not granted the good fortune to witness these things directly in the sessions which he (pbuh) held with those who knew him, nor in his expeditions or his journeys. However, we gather a sense of these qualities through his biography and the reports which have come down to us. As we read them, we long for the chance to see him for ourselves, to sit in on those sessions of which we have heard from others, and to witness the expeditions about which we have read but which we did not have the honor to take part in.

O Lord, compensate us for all of this through an encounter with him in the gardens of Your everlasting presence, and prepare us for this by granting us success, that we might cling to his guidance and follow in his footsteps by enduring with patience every ordeal and hardship that may await us on the path of obedience to Your religion and adherence to Your law!

Fifth: The Muslim who wishes to understand the true nature of Islamic jihad as it was engaged in by the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) needs to reflect deeply on the story of the two Companions who kept watch at the mountain pass which the Messenger of God (pbuh) had instructed them to guard. The jihad in which they were engaged was not merely a mechanical operation that consisted of naked resistance; in fact, such a distorted conception of jihad had never even occurred to any of these Muslims.

Rather, jihad – as the Apostle (pbuh) instructed his Companions and as they understood it based on his teachings – is a form of worship in which the Muslim's entire being clings to his Creator, may His majesty be exalted, in reverence, brokenness, and utter devotion. At no time is the believer closer to his Lord than those moments in which he turns his back on this world and turns his face willingly toward death and martyrdom. This being the case, it was quite natural for that Helper (‘Abbad Ibn Bishr, may God be pleased with him) to spend his night watch engaged in reverent worship, standing before his majestic Lord with all his senses and emotions taken up in intimate converse with the Divine and recitation of verses from His holy book. It was natural for him to take no thought for the arrow which sank into his flesh, nor for the arrow which succeeded it, because at that moment he was so absorbed in the delight of intimate communion with his Maker that every atom of his human constitution was enfolded, as it were, within a state of consciousness focused utterly and completely upon his august Sustainer.

When he regained consciousness of his surroundings and became concerned about what had befallen him, this was not due to the increased pain he had begun to feel, but rather, on account of the responsibility which he had been given and which he feared he might betray by losing his life or continuing in his state of tranquillity. This, then, is what obliged him to turn and awaken his companion so that he could take over guarding the frontier which they had been assigned to protect.

Reflect, now, brother and sister Muslims, on what this Helper said: “If I were to lose a frontier which the Messenger of God (pbuh) had commanded me to protect, he would cut off my soul whether I had cut my prayer short or completed it!” This is the true nature of the jihad in which God has commissioned us to win the victory, no matter how great the forces amassed against us. Compare this – alas! -- to the “jihad” in whose slogans we take such pride today. When we make such a comparison, however, we will realize the extent of the divine justice on earth. Indeed, God does not wrong people in the least; rather, it is people who wrong themselves.

Then raise your hands heavenward in entreaty, begging God not to destroy us for what has been done by the proponents of falsehood, and let hot tears flow down your cheeks. Perhaps if we clothe ourselves sincerely before God in the garb of humble subjection and worship, we may avert the curse which we have merited by our negligence and the evil we have committed against our own souls.

The Battle of Banu al-Mustaliq
(The Battle of al-Muraysi‘)

According to Ibn Ishaq and some scholars of the Prophetic biography, this battle took place in the year 6 A.H. However, most scholars hold, and correctly so, that it took place in the month of Sha‘ban, 5 A.H. The clearest evidence of this is that Sa‘d Ibn Mu‘adh, who plays a role in the account of “the Calumny” which we discuss in detail below, was alive at the time of this battle. This Sa‘d died in the Battle of Banu Qurayéah, which took place in the year 5 A.H. as we shall explain below. How, then, could Sa‘d Ibn Mu‘adh have been alive a year after his death?[185]

The reason for this battle was that Banu al-Mustaliq and their leader, al-Harith Ibn Dirar, were gathering their forces to attack the Muslims. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) learned of their plans, he went out against them and met them at a well known as the Well of al-Muraysi‘. The two armies joined in battle and God defeated Banu al-Mustaliq. Following the battle, the Prophet (pbuh) divided four-fifths of the spoils among the fighters, giving one share to each foot soldier and two shares to each horseman.[186]

Having seen the Muslims win one victory after another and wanting to get a share of the booty, a significant number of hypocrites who had refrained from taking part in previous battles joined the Muslims on this expedition. Based on two different chains of transmission, al-Bukhari and Muslim relate that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) divided the captives among the Companions, some of them asked him for a legal ruling on the matter of the practice of coitus interruptus. In reply, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, “You are under no obligation to refrain from this practice. No living soul will come into existence from now until the Day of Resurrection unless it was foreordained to do so.”

It is mentioned by both Ibn Sa‘d in his Tabaqat and Ibn Hisham in his Sirah that while the Prophet (pbuh) was staying at the well of al-Muraysi‘, a servant boy belonging to ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, by the name of Jahjah Ibn Sa‘id al-Ghifari got into a dispute with Sinan Ibn Wabar al-Juhni (over who would water first at the well). The two of them nearly came to blows, with al-Juhni crying, “O company of Helpers!” and Jahjah shouting, “O company of Emigrants!” When news of the altercation reached ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul, he became angry and said to the group of men who were with him, “What have they (the Muslims of Quraysh) done?! They have disputed with us and outnumbered us in our own land. It has happened just as the proverb says, ‘Fatten your dog and he will devour you!’ But once we return to Medina, those who are more powerful and honorable will drive out the weak and ignominious!”

Among those who heard what ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy had said was Zayd Ibn Arqam, who went to the Prophet (pbuh) and told him what had happened. When Zayd approached the Prophet, he (pbuh) was sitting with ‘Umar, who said, “O Messenger of God, call for ‘Abbad Ibn Bishr and have him put him (‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy) to death.” To this he (pbuh) replied, “How could I do that, ‘Umar? People will say that Muhammad kills his friends! No, but announce that we will break camp.” So, even though it was not an hour at which the Prophet (pbuh) was accustomed to breaking camp, they moved on.

The Messenger of God led the people onward that day until evening, then all night long until sunrise the

next day. Then he encamped with them, by which time they were all so exhausted that the moment they felt the ground beneath their weary bodies, they fell asleep. The reason he (pbuh) did this was to distract the people from thinking about what ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul had said the day before.

The 63rd Chapter of the Qur’an entitled, “The Hypocrites,” which was revealed in confirmation of what Zayd Ibn Arqam had said about ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul, contains the words, “They (hypocrites) say, ‘If we return to Medina, indeed the more honorable (‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul) will surely expel therefrom the meaner (God’s Messenger)!’” (Qur’an 63: 8)[187]

After they had returned to Medina, the Messenger of God (pbuh) was approached by ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, who said, “I hear that you intend to kill my father because of the report you received concerning him. If you are determined to do so, then give me the command, and I will bring you his head. The tribe of Khazraj knows that there is not a man among them who is more loyal to his father than I am. However, I fear that if you instruct someone else to kill him, I won’t be able to bear to see the man who killed ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy walking about free; then I’ll kill him myself, and in so doing, I will have murdered a believer on account of an unbeliever and go to the Hellfire.”

The Messenger of God replied, “Let us show him clemency, then, treating him well so long as he remains among us.”

From then on, whenever ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy began speaking out as he had before, his own men would reproach him with harsh words.

Speaking to ‘Umar Ibn al- Khattttab, he (pbuh) said, “What do you think, ‘Umar? If I had killed him on the day you told me to do so, people would have risen up in his defense. However, if I were to order these same men to kill him today, they would do so.”

`Umar replied, “I know now that the decision made by the Messenger of God (pbuh) brought more blessing than the decision which I advised him to take!”

The Calumny

The following, based on the accounts passed down by Muslim and al-Bukhari, is a summary version of the hadith concerning a false report which, based on an incident which occurred as the Muslims were returning home from their expedition against Banu al-Mustaliq, began circulating concerning A'ishah, may God be pleased with her.

A'ishah relates that she went out on this expedition with the Messenger of God (pbuh), saying: "When the Messenger of God (pbuh) had completed this expedition and was preparing to return home, he announced one night that his people would set out. I went out to attend to some personal needs and when I came back to camp, I placed my hand on my bosom only to find that my necklace had broken and fallen off. I went back to look for it and, as a result, I lagged behind the others in our preparations to leave. Meanwhile, the men who used to carry my sedan chair came and took it away, thinking that I was inside. They set off, and after the army had moved on, I found my necklace. I came to the other people's campsites, but found no one. Then I came back to my own campsite, thinking that they would miss me and come back for me. Meanwhile, Safwan Ibn al-Mu'attal, who had stayed behind the rest of the army, passed by where I was. When he saw me, he recognized me, since he had seen me before the Qur'anic verse requiring the hijab for the Prophet's wives had been revealed.[188] When he first saw me, I was asleep, and I awoke to the sound of him uttering the words, "Verily, unto God do we belong, and verily, unto Him we shall return."[189] So I concealed my face with the garment I was wearing, and I swear by God, we did not exchange a single word, nor did I hear him say anything but the words I have mentioned. He hurriedly had his camel kneel, and I rose and got on. Then he set off, leading the camel onward. We reached the army at around midday, by which time they had already encamped. In the end, there were people who perished on account of what happened, although the one who first started spreading the lies was 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul.

"When we reached Medina, I fell ill and remained ill for an entire month. People were spreading lies about me, but all I knew was that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was not treating me with the kindness with which he had always treated me before when I was sick. Instead, he would just come in, greet me, then ask, 'How are you?'

"After I recovered, I went out one night with Umm Mistah to relieve nature – for we did not yet have places inside our homes for such purposes. As we were returning, Umm Mistah tripped on her dress and exclaimed, 'Damn that Mistah!'

'"What a terrible thing to say!' I told her. 'Would you curse a man who fought at the Battle of Badr?!'

"She replied, 'So you haven't heard what he said?' Then she proceeded to inform me of the things that were being said by certain people, and I got sicker than ever.

"I cried all that night, and didn't sleep a wink. Meanwhile, the Messenger of God (pbuh) sought the counsel of some of his Companions concerning the matter, asking them whether he should divorce me. Some of them said, 'O Messenger of God, she is your wife, and we have never heard anything but good reports of her.' But others said, 'God has not restricted you in such matters. There are many women to choose from. But ask the slave girl, Barirah, about it; she will tell you the truth.'

"So the Messenger of God (pbuh) summoned Barirah and asked her, 'Have you seen A'ishah do anything suspicious?' She told him that she knew nothing but good about me. So he (pbuh) mounted the pulpit and said, 'O company of Muslims, who of you will give me leave to act against a man who has brought harm to the people of my household? For by God, I have known nothing but good about them. Besides, he has also spoken ill of a man about whom I have known nothing but good.'

"Then Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh got up and said, 'I give you leave, O Messenger of God. If he belongs to the Aws, we will behead him, and if he belongs to the Khazraj, just give us the word and we will carry it out.' Such a clamor then arose among the people in the mosque that the Messenger of God had to silence them.

"The Messenger of God (pbuh) then came to see me, and my parents were present. They feared that all my weeping would be the death of me, since the Prophet had not stayed with me since the rumors had begun. A month had gone by, yet he still had not received any revelation concerning the matter. When he sat down, he gave praise to God, then said, 'Listen now, A'ishah, I have heard such-and-such about you. If you are innocent, God will acquit you. But if you are guilty, then pray to God for forgiveness and repent of what you have done.'

"When the Messenger of God (pbuh) had finished speaking, my tears dried up till not a drop was left. Then I said to my father, 'Answer the Messenger of God (pbuh) on my behalf.'

'"I really don't know what to say,' he told me.

"So I said to my mother, 'Answer for me.'

"But she gave me the same reply.

"So I said, 'Well, it seems that you have heard the story so many times now that it has found a place in your souls and you have come to believe it. So if I tell you that I am innocent – and God knows that I am – you will not believe me, but if I confess to something – even though, God knows, I have done nothing wrong – you will believe me. The only thing I can say to you is what Joseph's father once said: "So (for me) patience is more fitting, and it is God (alone) Whose Help can be sought against that which you assert" (Qur'an 12: 18).'

"Then I turned away from them and lay down on my bed.

"However, before the Prophet (pbuh) had risen or anyone had left the house, God Almighty sent down a revelation upon him. He went into the kind of trance which had always accompanied the descent of a revelation, and the message he received was so weighty, he broke out in a sweat which resembled beads of silver on a winter day. As his unrest left him, he laughed, and the first thing he said was, 'Be of good cheer, A'ishah, for God has absolved you!'

'"Rise and thank him,' my mother told me.

'"No,' I objected, 'I will do nothing of the kind, and I will praise no one but God, for He is the One who has revealed my innocence.'

"As for the words which God revealed, they were as follows:

'Verily! Those who brought forth the slander (against A'ishah) are a group among you. Do not think it is evil for you. Nay, it is good for you. Unto every man among them will be paid that which he had earned of the sin, and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be a great torment' (Qur'an 24: 11).

"Prior to this time, my father (Abu Bakr) had been supporting Mistah, who was a needy relative of his. However, now he said, 'No, by God, after what he said about A'ishah, I will never spend another dirhem on him!' However, God then revealed the following words, 'And let not those among you who are blessed with graces and wealth swear not to give (any sort of help) to their kinsmen, the poor who beg, and those who left their homes for God's cause. Let them pardon and remit. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Qur'an 24: 22).

"In response, Abu Bakr said, 'I want God to forgive me, of course,' so he went back to supporting Mistah as he had been doing.

"Following this, he (pbuh) went out to address the people and recite to them the revelation which he had received concerning this matter. Then he called for Mistah Ibn Uthathah, Hassan Ibn Thabit, and Hamnah Bint Jahsh, all of whom had taken part in spreading the calumnious reports, and they were given the punishment prescribed for their transgression."[190]

Lessons and Principles

The expedition against Banu al-Musaliq affirms the following principles:

First: The legitimacy of distributing the spoils of war among the fighters after setting aside (1) one-fifth for the Prophet (pbuh) to dispose of as he saw fit, and (2) whatever items, such as weapons and the like, which were in the possession of the slain enemies, and which belonged by right to the Muslims who had slain them; as it is stated in the precept, "Whoever slays one of the enemy shall be entitled to the items in the latter's possession." As for the fifth part of the spoils mentioned here, it belonged to those mentioned by God Almighty in His book, where we read, "And know that whatever war-booty that you may gain, verily one-fifth of it is assigned to God, the Messenger, and to the near relatives, (and also) the orphans, the poor who beg and the wayfarer" (Qur'an 8: 41), while the remaining four-fifths were to be distributed among the fighters as the Messenger of God (pbuh) used to do.

This principle is agreed upon by the various imams as it applies to moveable property; as for land, there has been disagreement concerning the manner in which it is to be distributed, as we noted in detail in our discussion of the expedition against Banu al-Nadir.

Second: The permissibility of coitus interruptus, which involves the man's spilling his semen outside the womb during coitus, the abortion of an embryo before spirit is breathed into it, as well as the various practices which fall under the rubric of what is termed "birth control."

The tradition which we have mentioned in this regard is explicit in its allowance of coitus interruptus, for when the Companions asked the Prophet (pbuh) for a legal ruling on this practice, he (pbuh) replied, "You are not under obligation to refrain from it. No living soul will come into existence from now until the Day of Resurrection unless this was foreordained." In other words, it is not necessary for you to abandon this practice, because what God has foreordained is an inevitable reality, and your actions are incapable of altering this. Even more explicit is the hadith related by both Muslim and al-Bukhari on the authority of Jabir, may God be pleased with him, who said, "We used to practice coitus interruptus during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) while the Qur'an was still being revealed."

The majority of jurists have concluded on this basis that coitus interruptus is permissible in Islam, although they stipulate that it must be done with the wife's consent. It is only considered unacceptable if it is done out of fear that one will not be able to provide material support for the potential offspring. Ibn Hazm, however, disagrees with the majority view and holds that coitus interruptus is entirely disallowed. The basis for this view is the hadith related by Muslim according to which, when the Prophet (pbuh) was

asked about this practice, he (pbuh) said, "It is a subtle form of wa'd."[191] Ibn Hazm cites other hadiths as well, all of which are categorized as "restricted" hadiths.[192] One such hadith is narrated with a chain of transmission going back to Nafi', according to which 'Umar's son did not practice coitus interruptus. In addition, he cites 'Umar's son as saying, "If I learned that any of my sons engaged in this practice, I would punish him." According to another hadith, narrated with a chain of transmission going back to al-Hajjaj Ibn al-Minhal, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib frowned on the practice.

Ibn Hazm's response to the hadith from Jabir cited by other Islamic scholars is to say that it has been abrogated.[193] Commenting on Ibn Hazm's view, Ibn Hajar states, "This point of view is contradicted by two hadiths. One of these was narrated by al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i, who established its soundness by tracing it back through a reliable chain of narrators including Mu'ammar, on the authority of Yahyá Ibn Kathir, on the authority of Jabir, who said, "We used to own slave girls and we used to practice coitus interruptus in our relations with them. When the Jews learned of this, they said, 'This is just a mild form of infanticide.' The Messenger of God (pbuh) was then asked about this, and he said, 'The Jews have spoken an untruth. If God wills to create a soul, there is nothing you can do to prevent it.'" As for the other hadith, it is basically the same account with a different chain of narrators, related on the authority of Muhammad Ibn 'Amr, on the authority of Abu Salamah, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah.[194]

As I see it, it is clear that the Prophet's saying that coitus interruptus is "a subtle form of wa'd" is not an absolute prohibition. Rather, judging the matter in light of the other well-established hadiths we have cited in this connection, it is more appropriate to interpret this statement as a restriction recommended for those who have doubts as to the appropriateness of this course of action and who, therefore, would be best advised to avoid it. This is the view adopted by the majority of Islamic scholars.

Ibn Hazm's claim that the hadiths which allow coitus interruptus have been abrogated is refuted by the hadith from Jabir – "We used to practice coitus interruptus during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) while the Qur'an was still being revealed" -- which is cited by all of the six major hadith compilers except for Abu Dawud. Commenting upon this hadith, Muslim adds, "News reached the Prophet (pbuh) that his Companions were engaging in this practice, and he (pbuh) did not prohibit it. Hence, if the ruling permitting this practice had not remained valid until his (pbuh) death, Jabir would not have said this; rather, he would have told us what legal ruling on this matter had been settled upon."

The ruling concerning the abortion of a fetus before spirit has been breathed into it follows upon the permissibility of coitus interruptus. However, some Islamic scholars who have issued legal rulings permitting coitus interruptus have forbidden abortion; they appear to be hesitant to confirm a clear analogy between the two practices, considering the embryo[195] to be closer to a human soul than the sperm cell prior to conception. However, the reason for such hesitation is not entirely clear, unless, perhaps, it is due to a fear that the abortion would cause a health risk to the pregnant mother.

Based on the foregoing, the Islamic legal ruling on birth control is that one ought to adopt a medical means for the prevention of pregnancy rather than relying on coitus interruptus. The only conditions which apply to this practice are that it have no potential of harming the wife, and that it be based on the mutual desire of both spouses. I am not aware of any objection which has been raised to such a practice by any of our leading scholars of jurisprudence, may God have mercy on them all, except that al-Hafié Wali al-Din al-'Iraqi quotes Sheikh 'Imad al-Din Ibn Yusuf and Sheikh 'Izz al-Din Ibn 'Abd al-Salam as saying that a woman is forbidden to take any substance which has the capacity to prevent pregnancy, "even if the husband agrees to it."[196]

This opinion is not supported by the evidence to be found in the Prophetic Sunnah, nor by the view agreed upon by the majority of Musim scholars. However, one of the most important things to understand in this

regard is that the Islamic ruling permitting coitus interruptus, and everything included in what is referred to today as birth control, concerns a matter which is to be decided by the husband and wife themselves without any pressure or control being exerted upon them from without. It is an agreed-upon principle of jurisprudence that the practices which an individual is permitted to engage in may not be legislated for or imposed upon the community as a whole.

Divorce, for example, is a measure permitted to the married individual if there is some need or interest which requires it in his view. However, the ruler does not possess the right to command or require people to exercise this right and divorce their spouses; and the same applies to birth control. This fundamental principle is one which you need to be fully aware of lest you be confused by those who make it their profession to manufacture Islamic legal rulings, saying, for example, "The Sunnah allows birth control; consequently, the state has the right to oblige its subjects to engage in this practice by whatever means it sees fit." Apart from the desire to obfuscate and distort, there is no connection whatsoever between this premise and the conclusion which such people wish to draw from it.

To sum up, then: If we look at the matter of birth control in light of the relationship between the two spouses, including both the rights and the interests which they share in common, it remains a simple, straightforward issue which need cause us no confusion. If, by contrast, it is being propagated by the media based on a directive philosophy which aims to impose it upon others, it becomes a peril which Muslims must resist. Moreover, their resistance must be based on an understanding of the various deceptive schemes hatched by Muslims' foes – including deceptive talk of problems with the economy, production, and the like.

Third: The manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) dealt with the problem caused by 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul points to the extraordinary skill which God had given him in managing affairs, educating and guiding people, and overcoming their difficulties. The words which he (pbuh) had heard Ibn Salul utter were sufficient justification for him to have him put to death. However, he dealt with the matter more magnanimously than this; hence, when he learned of the furor and discord among the people, realizing at the same time that the army contained a considerable number of hypocrites who were looking for an occasion such as this to justify carrying out their wicked designs, he did not become overwrought or act on the basis of his emotions. Instead, he allowed wisdom alone to be his guide. By instructing the people to move on at a time when they were not accustomed to breaking camp, he (pbuh) ensured that they would be so preoccupied with the requirements of the journey that they would have no chance to gather and discuss things. He (pbuh) kept leading them onward for the rest of that day, the entire night, and part of the next day, thereby depriving the hypocrites of the opportunity to spread their falsehoods. Then, by the time they encamped once again, they were too exhausted to talk about anything and everyone fell sound asleep.

The people expected that upon their return to Medina, the Prophet (pbuh) would show severity toward the hypocrites and put 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul to death. It was because of this expectation that Ibn Salul's son, may God be pleased with him, came to the Prophet (pbuh) and proposed that he be the one to execute his father if he (pbuh) intended to issue an order to this effect. However, to 'Abdullah's surprise, the Apostle (pbuh) replied with the words, "Let us show him clemency, then, treating him well so long as he remains among us." Note, moreover, his explanation of this decision in his words to 'Umar: "How could I do that, 'Umar? People will say that Muhammad kills his friends!" As a result of this decision, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy's supporters distanced themselves from him, and it was they who now reprimanded and exposed him whenever he sought to speak out in such a manner again. One must remember that in terms of earthly judicial rulings, a hypocrite is to be treated as though he were a true Muslim, while at the same time others are to take precautions to protect themselves from any treachery he might commit.

As we reflect on the adeptness and wisdom displayed by the Prophet (pbuh) in the areas of political leadership and the management of worldly affairs, we must remind ourselves once again that all such

qualities remained subordinate to his identity as a prophet. In other words, these qualities were all outcomes of his being God's Prophet and Messenger to people; hence, it is a serious error to analyze such characteristics in isolation from their primary, fundamental source, namely, his prophethood and his divine mission and message. For, as we mentioned above, if we fail to bear this important fact in mind, we will have fallen into the trap set by the enemies of Islam – along with those who, having mastered the art of blind mimicry, bear their standard -- who wish to distract Muslims from the contemplation and appreciation of his prophethood and all the significance this holds for them.

Fourth: As for the story of the calumnious reports circulated about A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, it is a unique episode in the series of ordeals and tribulations which the Messenger of God (pbuh) endured at the hands of the enemies of religion and, in particular, at the hands of the hypocrites. The harm which he (pbuh) suffered through this particular ordeal took a greater toll on him than all the trials that had preceded it. This, after all, is the nature of the evil perpetrated by dissimulators, who are invariably crueler than others would be and more effective in the intrigue and harm they can cause, since they have more opportunities to carry out their designs.

This incident, as we have said, hurt the Prophet (pbuh) more badly than any other trial to which he had been subjected thus far, because everything which he had endured prior to this had been tribulations which he expected and which, as a result, he could prepare himself to accept and endure; in fact, he knew them to be an inevitable part of life for those who call others to Islam. This incident, by contrast, took him completely off guard; this was something different – a rumor which, if it turned out to be true, would leave a gaping wound in that which was nearest and dearest to him, namely, his attachment to another human being and, indeed, his very honor and dignity. And how was he to know whether it was true or false?! As a result of this uncertainty, he was thrown into a state of inevitable distress and turmoil. If the divine revelation affirming A'ishah's innocence had come more quickly, thereby bringing the truth to light and exposing the lies being spread by the hypocrites, this would have served to deliver him from his turmoil and relieve him of his suspicions and doubts. However, the revelation tarried for more than a month, which was an additional source of anxiety and doubt.

Even so, this ordeal concealed a divine wisdom which was at work to disclose the Prophet's character in an unprecedented way, revealing it in all of its pristine distinctiveness. The meaning of prophethood in his (pbuh) life may well have remained obscure in the minds of both the unbelievers and some of the believers if this incident had not taken place. As it was, however, it shook him up with such force that it separated his merely human side from his identity as prophet, thereby manifesting the meaning of prophethood and revelation for all to behold. In this way, the divine wisdom ensured that there would be no more room for confusion between these two supernatural phenomena – prophethood and revelation – and the various other subjective, psychological phenomena to which human beings are subject.

When the Prophet (pbuh) got wind of this rumor he was, in addition to carrying out his prophetic mission, carrying on with life as an ordinary human being: thinking and acting like anyone else would have done, only within the limits of the sinlessness which is characteristic of all of God's prophets and apostles. Hence, he received the reports just as they would have been received by any human being, that is, as one who has no supernatural knowledge of the unknown or the ability to discern that the source of what he was being told was fabrication and deceit. Consequently, he was disturbed just as anyone else would have been, he became suspicious just as anyone else would have done, and he began turning the matter over and over in his mind and seeking counsel and advice from his most trusted Companions.

In order for the divine wisdom to bring out the purely human side of the Prophet's personality, it was necessary for the revelation to be delayed as long as it was. By means of this delay, two facts of the utmost significance were brought to light: The first of these two facts is that Muhammad's prophethood and divine mission did not cause him (pbuh) to cease being one human being among others. In other words, those who

believe in him are not to imagine that his being a prophet somehow took him beyond the limits of humanity such that they can attribute to him a power to influence events which belongs to God alone. As for the second fact, it is that the divine revelation was not a subjective experience which arose from within the Prophet's own psyche, nor was it subject to his control. Had this been the case, he (pbuh) could easily have put an end to this problem from its very inception and relieved himself of its implications and consequences; he could have turned the goodness and integrity which he believed to be found in all his people into words of the Qur'an so as to reassure his believing companions and silence those who were merely interested in prying into his personal affairs. However, he did not do so, because he wasn't able.

Commenting upon this latter fact, Dr. Muhammad 'Abdullah Darraz writes:

Did the hypocrites not circulate this false rumor about his wife, A'ishah, may God be pleased with her? As the revelation was delayed, people's tongues wagged until their hearts were in their throats, as it were. As for him (pbuh), he could do nothing but say with the utmost reserve, "I know nothing but good about her." He (pbuh) did his utmost to investigate the matter and seek the counsel of his Companions. Meanwhile, an entire month went by, with people continuing to say, "We have never known her to do wrong." As for him (pbuh), all he said to her in the end was, "A'ishah, I have heard such-and-such about you. If you are innocent, God will acquit you. But if you are guilty, then pray to God for forgiveness."

This is what the Prophet (pbuh) was inspired by his conscience to say. It is, as you can see, the kind of thing which would be said by a human being who has been given no special insight into the unknown. It is, moreover, the speech of a faithful friend who lays no store by mere speculation and refrains from speaking about things of which he has no knowledge. Nevertheless, after uttering these words, he (pbuh) refrained from getting up from where he was seated until he had received the opening passage of the chapter of the Qur'an entitled, "The Light," which announced A'ishah's innocence and confirmed her uprightness and purity.

Now, if the Qur'an had been of his own making, what would there have been to prevent him (pbuh) from inventing these conclusive words before this time and attributing them to the divine revelation, thereby protecting his honor, defending his lair, as it were, and silencing the tongues of those who were raising these false accusations? However, he would not have lied to others or to God. As the divine revelation says, "And if he (Muhammad) had forged false sayings concerning Us, We surely should have seized him by his right hand, and then certainly should have cut off his life artery! No one could protect him after that!" (Qur'an 69: 44-47)[197]

A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, was the first person to become aware of these two facts. In fact, so firm was her faith in God alone and her submission to Him and none other, she forgot everything and everyone else. This is why, when her mother told her to get up and thank the Prophet (pbuh), she replied saying, "I will do nothing of the kind, and I will praise no one but God, for He is the one who has revealed my innocence!"

These words might appear to have shown some discourtesy toward the Prophet (pbuh). However, the circumstance and the state in which she found herself virtually dictated this statement to her; she was carried along by the situation which had been brought about by the divine wisdom – a situation whose purpose was to confirm the doctrine which Muslim believers embrace, to put an end to the falsehoods being spread by the hypocrites and those who had no faith in God, and to reveal the meaning of belief in God's oneness and radical devotion to Him alone. This being the case, the story of the calumny against A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, contained a brilliant divine wisdom which aimed to confirm the truth of Islam and dispel any doubts or suspicions which might surround it. Herein lies the beneficence which God manifests in the words, "(but, O you who are thus wronged,) Do not think it is evil for you. Nay,

it is good for you!" (Qur'an 24: 11)

Fifth: This story provides evidence in favor of the legitimacy of the punishment for falsely accusing someone of unchastity. As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) called for those who had explicitly uttered slanderous accusations and had them subjected to the punishment stipulated for this offense, namely, eighty lashes.[198] About this point there is no question.

A question does arise, however, as to why the person who had initiated these vicious rumors, namely, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul, escaped this punishment. The reason for this, as is mentioned by Ibn al-Qayyim, is that Ibn Salul managed to spread these lies among the people by devious means, drawing the slanderous words out of others' mouths by means of shrewd questions and the like, whereas the punishment prescribed for such false accusations may only be inflicted on those who have voiced the accusation openly and directly.

Let us conclude our discussion of this story and the lessons which it offers with a citation of the entire ten verses which were revealed in acquittal of A'ishah, Mother of the Faithful, and in condemnation of the hypocrites and wrongdoers who had sought to do her harm:

Verily! Those who brought forth the slander (against A'ishah) are a group among you. Do not think it is evil for you. Nay, it is good for you. Unto every man among them will be paid that which he had earned of the sin, and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be a great torment. Why then did not the believers, men and women, when you heard it (the slander), think good of their own people and say, 'This (charge) is an obvious lie?" Why did they not (demand of the accusers that they) produce four witnesses? Since they (the slanderers) did not produce witnesses, they verily are liars in the sight of God. And had it not been for the grace of God and His mercy unto you in this world and in the hereafter, a great torment would have touched you for that whereof you had spoken. When you were propagating it with your tongues, and uttering with your mouths that whereof you had no knowledge, you counted it a little thing, while it was very great in the sight of God. And (once again): Why did you not, when you heard it, say: "It is not right of us to speak of this"? Glory be to You (O God). This is a great sin! God forbids you from it and warns you not to repeat the like of it forever, if you are believers. And God makes (His) messages plain to you, and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise! Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment in this world and in the hereafter. And God knows and you know not. And had it not been for the grace of God and His mercy on you, (God would have hastened the punishment upon you), and God is full of kindness, Most Merciful" (Qur'an 24: 11-20).

The Battle of the Trench
(The Battle of the Confederates)

This battle is also referred to as the Battle of the Confederates and, according to Ibn Ishaq, 'Urwah Ibn al-Zubayr, Qatadah, al-Bayhaqi, and most scholars of the Prophetic biography, it took place in the month of Shawwal, 5 A.H. However, one scholar, Musá Ibn 'Uqbah, held that it took place in 4 A.H., a view which was adopted by al-Bukhari and Malik as well.[199]

Its cause: The reason for this war was that the leaders of the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Nadir had set out for Mecca, where they called upon the Qurayshites to join them in waging war on the Messenger of God (pbuh), saying, "We will fight with you until we have rooted him out. The religion which you followed before is better than the religion of Muhammad." It was concerning these men that the following verses were revealed:

Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the scripture? They believe in Jibt (superstition) and Taghut (false deities) and say to the disbelievers that they are better guided as regards the way than the believers (Muslims). They are those whom God curses, and he whom God curses, you will not find for him (any) helper (Qur'an 4: 51-52).

After reaching an agreement with the Qurayshites to wage war on the Muslims, the same group from Banu al-Nadir went out to the men of Ghahafan and issued the same invitation to them, presenting their case persistently until they had agreed to fight with them. They then met with Banu Fazarah and Banu Murrah, with whom they agreed on a time and place at which they would set out against the Messenger of God (pbuh).[200]

The Muslims' preparation for war: When the Messenger of God (pbuh) received news of what these men intended to do, he called his people out, informed them of the plans being made by the enemy and consulted them as to what action to take. Salman al-Farisi advised him (pbuh) to dig a trench, and the idea met with acceptance among the Muslims (the use of trenches as a means of warfare being unheard of heretofore among the Arabs). Hence, they set out from Medina and the Messenger of God (pbuh) encamped with them at the foot of Mount Sal'. Then, with the mountain behind them, they all set about digging the trench between themselves and the enemy. At this time, the Muslims numbered three thousand, while the Qurayshites and the other tribes which had allied themselves against them numbered ten thousand.[201]

Al-Bukhari relates the following on the authority of al-Bara', who said, "At the Battle of the Confederates, when the Messenger of God (pbuh) was digging the trench, I watched him moving the dirt out of the trench until there was such a thick layer of soil on his stomach that I could no longer see the skin beneath, even though it was quite hairy." Moreover, Anas, may God be pleased with him, relates that as the Helpers and the Emigrants dug the trench and carried the soil on their backs, they sang poems in the rajaz meter, saying:

We've pledged our allegiance to Muhammad,

To live in submission to God as long as we live.

And the Prophet (pbuh) would reply, singing:

O Lord, there is no good but that of the hereafter,

So grant Your blessing to the Helpers and the Emigrants.[202]

Al-Bukhari also narrates the following account on the authority of Jabir, may God be pleased with him, who said:

It was before the Battle of the Trench, and as we were digging we came up against something so hard that we were unable to continue. So some of us came to the Prophet (pbuh) and told him about it.

"I'm coming down," he (pbuh) said.

Then, with a rock tied to his stomach, he (pbuh) got up and came to help us. We went on working this way for three days without a bite to eat. Then the Prophet (pbuh) took the pick and struck, and it went back to being like so much sand piled up.

Then I said, "O Messenger of God, may I have your permission to go to my house?"

When I got home, I said to my wife, "I saw the Prophet (pbuh) in a state that I can bear no longer. Do you have any food?"

She replied, "I have some barley and a she-goat."

She then slaughtered the she-goat and ground the barley, and we placed the meat in the kettle. When the dough had been divided and the kettle was on the fire and nearly done, I came back to the Prophet (pbuh) and said to him, "I have slaughtered a fatted she-goat. So rise, and bring with you one or two of the other men."

"How much food is there?" he (pbuh) asked.

So I told him, and he said, "That is plenty, and will be a blessing. Tell your wife not to remove the kettle from the fire or the bread from the oven until I come."

Thereupon, he (pbuh) called out to the Emigrants and the Helpers and said, "Get up!"

(According to the same hadith as handed down by a different chain of narrators, the Prophet (pbuh) shouted, "O people of the trench! Jabir has prepared some food, so come on!")

Be that as it may, when Jabir came in to where his wife was, he said, "Woe betide you! The Prophet has brought the Helpers, the Emigrants, and everybody with them!"

"Did he ask you how much food you had?" she asked.

"Yes, I did," I told her.

"Well, then," she replied, "God and His Messenger know best."

Then the Prophet (pbuh) came and said to the men, "Come in, but do not shove or crowd one another."

Then he (pbuh) began dividing up the bread, placing some meat on each piece, and closing the kettle and the oven again each time he took something out of them. In this fashion, he continued to bring food to his companions, then go back for more, breaking the bread and ladling out of the kettle until everyone had had his fill. And there was some food left over!

He (pbuh) then told her (Jabir's wife), "Eat some, and give the rest away, for the people are famine-stricken," while according to another version of the same hadith, Jabir went on to say, "I swear to God, they ate until they were satisfied, and when they left, our kettle was just as full as it had been when they arrived, and the bread was as if it had not been touched."[203]

The hypocrites' attitude toward work on the trench: Ibn Hisham narrates that the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the Muslims were slowed down in their progress on the trench by certain hypocrites who began pretending to be too faint to continue working and who, without informing the Messenger of God (pbuh), would slip away and go back to their families. As for the believing Muslims, whenever any of them needed to attend to nature, as it were, he would ask the Prophet (pbuh) for permission to do so, and permission would be granted. Then, as soon as he was able, he would resume his work as before. It was in connection with this that the following verse was revealed:

The true believers are only those who believe in God and His Messenger, and when they are engaged with him upon some common matter, they do not depart unless they have asked his permission. Verily! Those who ask your permission, it is (only) they who (truly) believe in God and His Messenger. However, when they ask your permission for some affairs of theirs, grant permission to whom you will of them, and ask God to forgive them: for God is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!" (Qur'an 24: 62)

Banu al-Nadir 's abrogation of the covenant: In the meantime, a Jew of the tribe of Banu al-Nadir by the name of Huyayy Ibn Akhtab al-Nadari came to Ka'b Ibn Asad al-Quraéi (a Jew of the tribe of Banu Qurayéah) in the hope of persuading him to abrogate the covenant into which he had entered with the Messenger of God (pbuh). Huyayy told Ka'b, "I have brought you Quraysh, including their notables and leaders, after encamping with them at Mujtama' al-Asyal at Rumah Well (in Medina). I have also brought you the notables and leaders of Ghatafan, with whom I encamped at Naqam, beside (Mount) Uhud. They have promised me to continue striving until we have extirpated Muhammad and those who follow him."

Ka'b replied, "What you have brought me is the worst ignominy of all time! Woe betide you, Huyayy, let me be! I have never known Muhammad to be anything but honest and loyal."

However, Huyayy kept after Ka'b until he had convinced him to betray the Messenger of God (pbuh) and violate the covenant between them. When news of this reached the Prophet (pbuh), he sent Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh to verify the report. He (pbuh) instructed him to decide on a signal which only he (pbuh) could understand with which to let him know if the report was accurate, so as not to discourage or alarm the Muslims. If the report turned out to be false, however, Sa'd was to announce this openly among the people. When Sa'd investigated the report and found it to be true, he came back to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and said to him, "'Udal and al-Qarah," that is to say, like the treachery committed by these two tribes.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, saying, "God is greatest! Be of good cheer, O company of Muslims."[204]

After the news that Banu Qurayéah had abrogated their covenant with the Messenger of God (pbuh) reached the Muslims, the hypocrites began openly attempting to undermine them; it was as if the enemy had come upon them from above and below, as it were. Spreading lies among the people of Medina, some of them said, "Muhammad was promising us the treasures of Khasrau and Caesar, but as things are now, we can hardly ensure our safety when we go out to take care of nature!" When the Messenger of God (pbuh) realized how difficult things had become for the Muslims, he sent for Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh and Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah and consulted with them concerning whether to make peace with the tribe of Ghatafan, offering them one-third of the crops of Medina in return for their not going to war against the Muslims.

The two men replied, 'O Messenger of God, is this something which you personally would like us to do, something which God has commanded you to do, or something which you are doing for our sakes?"

"Actually," he (pbuh) told them, "it is something I want to do in order to spare you having to go to war against such formidable foes."

Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh then said, "There is no need for you to do such a thing for us. On the contrary, we shall give them nothing but the sword. Then let God judge between us!"

Upon hearing this, the Prophet's face lit up and he said, "So be it, then!"[205]

Ibn Ishaq narrates on the authority of Asim Ibn 'Amr Ibn Qatadah, on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, that "the peace settlement between the Muslims and Ghatafan was never actually signed or confirmed; rather, nothing but a discussion of the matter took place."[206]

As for the polytheists, they were surprised by the trench, since this was a stratagem which the Arabs had never been known to employ before. In any case, they encamped around the trench, surrounding the Muslims, and no fighting took place. However, some of the polytheists began heading for a narrow opening in the trench and managed to rush in through it. The Muslims rallied around the place where the enemy had come in, repelling some of them and killing others. Among the polytheists slain at this time was 'Amr Ibn Wudd, who was killed by 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him.

The polytheists' defeat without combat: God protected the Muslims from the necessity of combat, defeating the polytheists who had gathered against them in two ways, neither of which was the doing of the Muslims themselves. As for the first, one of the polytheists by the name of Nu'aym Ibn Mas'ud came to the Messenger of God (pbuh), professing faith in Islam and offering to carry out any command he (pbuh) might give him. In response, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "You are only one among us. However, if you can, sow discord among our enemies such that they turn against each other. After all, war is nothing but duplicity."

So Nu'aym Ibn Mas'ud went to Banu Qurayéah – who still counted him an idolater -- to persuade them not to involve themselves with Quraysh in any fighting until they had taken some hostages from among them, thereby ensuring that the Qurayshites would not retreat in the middle of the battle, leaving Banu Qurayéah to fend for themselves in Medina against Muhammad and his Companions. Banu Qurayéah welcomed the idea enthusiastically. He then approached the Qurayshites and informed them that Banu Qurayéah regretted the pact they had made with them and that they had covertly agreed with the Messenger of God (pbuh) to kidnap a number of the notables of both Quraysh and Ghatafan, then turn them over to Muhammad for him to put them to death. Consequently, he told them, if some of the Jews sent asking them for collateral in the form of some of their men, they should not hand a single man over to them. Following this, Nu'aym came to the men of Ghatafan and told them the same thing he had told the Qurayshites. In this manner, he stirred them up against one another, destroying the mutual trust they had once had, and each group began accusing the others of treachery and deceit.

As for the other way in which God routed the Muslims' foes, it was a violent, frightful wind which, some ten days after the beginning of the siege they had laid against the Muslims, came upon them on a cold, dark night. When it blew in, it overturned their kettles, pulled up their tents, and broke their tent pegs. Muslim relates the following account on the authority of Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yaman, may God be pleased with him, who said:

We were together with the Messenger of God (pbuh) during the Battle of the Trench when a powerful wind and a biting cold came upon us.

The Prophet (pbuh) then said, "Whoever of you brings me news of the enemy, God will cause to be with me on the Day of Resurrection."

But we all kept silent, and no one answered him a word.

He (pbuh) said the same thing a second time, and again there was no response.

Then, after repeating what he (pbuh) had said a third time and still receiving no answer, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Get up, Hudhayfah, and bring me news of the enemy."

So, since he (pbuh) had called me by name, I had no choice but to get up.

He (pbuh) said to me, "Go and bring me news of the enemy, and do not do or say anything which would cause them alarm."

As I departed on my mission, I was so cold and frightened, I felt as though I were walking to my death; however, I kept going until I reached them. I saw Abu Sufyan warming his back beside the fire and I placed an arrow in my bow, intending to shoot him. But then I remembered what the Messenger of God (pbuh) had said about not doing anything to cause them alarm, so, knowing that if I shot at him I would hit my target, I turned back, still feeling like someone who is walking toward his demise.

When I told the Messenger of God (pbuh) about what I had found out, he (pbuh) removed a cloak that he used to pray in and placed it on me. Then I dozed off and slept until the next morning, at which time he (pbuh) said to me, "Get up, sleepy head!"[207]

Ibn Ishaq narrates the same hadith with the following additional details. Hudhayfah says, "As I slipped into the enemy camp, the wind and the heavenly hosts were working havoc, not leaving a single kettle in place, nor a fire lit, nor a structure standing. Then Abu Sufyan got up and said, "O company of Quraysh! Let each of you look to see who is sitting beside him." So I took the hand of the man who was beside me and I said, "Who are you?"

"I'm so-and-so, son of so-and-so."

Then Abu Sufyan said, "O company of Quraysh! The truth is, you have become a people without a refuge. The camels and the horses are exhausted, Banu Qurayéah have let us down and we have heard distressing reports about them, and now we are suffering from this violent wind, as you can see. So break camp and be on your way, for I myself am leaving."[208]

By the next morning, all the polytheists had turned back, so the Messenger of God (pbuh) and those with him returned to Medina.

During all the days and nights the Muslims spent behind the trench, the Prophet (pbuh) made ceaseless supplication to God, imploring the Almighty to grant the Muslims succor and victory. One of his prayers was: "O Lord, Revealer of the Qur'an and the One who brings swift retribution, defeat the allies who have come against us. O Lord, overpower them and shake them to their foundations!"[209]

During this confrontation with the enemy, the time for the 'asr, or late afternoon, prayer arrived; however, rather than praying it on time, the Prophet (pbuh) prayed a compensatory prayer later. Both Muslim and al-Bukhari narrate that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab came after sunset and began cursing the men of Quraysh who were bent on denying the truth, saying, "O Messenger of God, by the time I completed the 'asr prayer, the sun was about to set!"

The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "I myself did not pray it."

Then we rose to go to Buthan (a spot in Medina), where he (pbuh) performed his ablutions and we did the same. Then, after the sun had set, he performed the 'asr (Late Afternoon) prayer, followed by the maghrib, that is, the prayer performed at sundown.[210] In this connection, Muslim includes another hadith according to which at the Battle of the Trench, he (pbuh) said, "They kept us too busy to perform the 'asr prayer, so may God fill their homes and their graves with fiery torment!" Then he proceeded to perform it between the two evening prayers, namely, the maghrib, or sundown prayer, and the isha, or final evening prayer.

Lessons and Principles

This battle also, as you can see, came about due to the plotting and treachery of the Jews, for it was they who incited others to make war on the Muslims and gathered the forces against them. Nor was this action limited to Banu al-Nadir, who had been expelled from Medina; rather, they were joined by Banu Qurayéah, who were still bound to the Muslims by covenants and treaties. Not only so, but they were willing to violate these agreements without the Muslims having done anything to warrant such action.

This point requires no further comment or discussion. Hence, let us turn our attention now to the lessons and rulings which may be derived from the events of this battle, and which we may summarize as follows:

First: One of the methods of warfare employed by the Muslims in this battle was the digging of a trench; in fact, this is the first battle in Arab-Islamic history in which the digging of trenches was undertaken. Prior to this time, it had been a recognized practice only among non-Arabs, and the person who suggested the idea was Salman al-Farisi.[211] As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) was pleased with the idea and, without hesitation, called upon his companions to carry it out.

One thing which this event tells us is that what every believing Muslim seeks is wisdom. Hence, wherever he finds it, he will accept it and, indeed, it is he who is most worthy of it. However much Islamic law frowns upon Muslims blindly following and imitating others, it encourages them to glean all that is good, including beneficial principles, practices, and the like, wherever they happen to be found. The general Islamic principle in this connection is that the Muslim must not neglect his capacity for independent, prudent thought as it relates to his behavior and affairs. If a Muslim applies this principle, he will never allow himself docilely and unthinkingly to be led about by others wherever they wish him to go. Nor, by contrast, will it be possible for him to discount any principle, practice, or system which appeals to the enlightened mind and the unfettered intellect, and which is consistent with the fundamentals of Islamic law.

This manner of conduct, which God has mandated for the Muslim, emerges from one fundamental source, namely, the dignity with which God has endowed human beings from birth. It is human beings whom God has created to exercise sovereignty over all other creatures. And as for the practice of humble worship of God Almighty and obedience to the precepts set forth in His law, this is the means by which to guarantee and preserve this dignity and sovereignty.

Second: The scene in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) is at work with his companions digging the trench contains a lesson of major importance for us, in that it points clearly to the equality established by Islamic society among all of its Muslim members. Moreover, it reveals to us that justice and equality in Islamic society are not mere slogans for the purpose of giving the society an attractive appearance, as it were; rather, they are the actual basis for all Islamic values and principles, both outwardly and inwardly.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) did not summon the Muslims to dig the trench, then go oversee the operation from some majestic palace, comfortable and relaxed. Nor did he come to the work site in some sort of ostentatious celebration to take a pick from someone's hand and, holding it with his fingertips, strike the ground a single time to announce the commencement of their labor. In other words, he didn't delude them into believing that he had taken part in it, only to cast the pick aside and turn his back on them, shaking out of his garment whatever particles of dust had clung to it.

Rather, the Messenger of God (pbuh) joined in the work like any one of his comrades. He even wore a garment of soil and dust on his body, such that had you witnessed the scene, you would not have been able to distinguish him (pbuh) from anyone else. As they labored, they sang verses of poetry to keep each other going, and he sang along. They grew weary and hungry, and he (pbuh) was among the weariest and hungriest. This is the reality of the equality established by the Islamic law between ruler and ruled, rich and poor, pauper and prince. You will not find a single branch of this law and its precepts which does not rest on this very foundation and serve to guarantee this right.

Let me caution, however, against referring to this manner of conduct or rule as "democracy," for there is a world of difference between the two. The source of the justice and equality which we have been describing here is a quality shared by all human beings without exception, namely, the state of being a servant of God who owes Him humble veneration and worship. This quality places all of us on a single level, without any distinctions by way of position or degree of respect. As for what is commonly referred to as "democracy," by contrast, its source is the act of setting up the majority opinion as a ruler and judge and imposing it upon others, regardless of the nature of the opinion in question. The Islamic law grants no special privileges to any class or group of people, nor does it single out this or that group by giving it immunity (from the consequences of the law) for any cause whatsoever, since the quality of being a servant to the One Creator does away with all such distinctions.

Third: This same scene further reveals the meaning of prophethood in the person of the Messenger (pbuh), making us aware of the intense love and compassion which he felt for his companions, and providing us with another example of the miracles with which God honored him (pbuh).

As for what this scene manifests of his prophetic persona, it appears through the severe hunger which he voluntarily endured during his labor with the others on the trench. His suffering was so acute, he tied a rock to his belly to keep himself from feeling the pangs being produced by his empty stomach. Now what do you suppose would have moved him to endure such hardship and exertion? Was it the aspiration to achieve a position of leadership? The desire for wealth and authority? The ambition to find himself surrounded by followers? All such longings stand in stark contrast to what he (pbuh) underwent; after all, the man who covets prestige, dominion or power could not possibly muster the patience required to endure the afflictions which he (pbuh) did here. Rather, what led him to endure all of this was the responsibility of the mission he had been given and the message he had been assigned to deliver to people. This, then, is the prophetic persona which manifests itself in his work with his comrades on digging the trench.

As for the powerful love and compassion which the Prophet (pbuh) held in his heart for his comrades, it may be seen clearly in his way of responding to Jabir's invitation to partake of the little food he had, food which he had prepared specially for him. What had moved Jabir to extend this invitation to the Prophet (pbuh) was his discovery of the intense hunger he was suffering, a discovery which he made when he saw the rock tied to his (pbuh) belly. However, he only had enough food in his household for a small number of people; hence, he was obliged to limit the number of guests he invited.

At the same time, it would have been unthinkable for the Prophet (pbuh) – who felt more tender concern for his comrades than a mother for her own children -- to leave his friends when they were overwhelmed with work and wincing from hunger just as he was, in order to absent himself along with three or four of his companions for a time of relaxation and nourishment! As for Jabir, of course, he had had no choice but to do as he did, and what he did was perfectly natural. Acting within his material means and the food in his possession – which, given recognized societal customs concerning what one offers one's guests, would only suffice a modest number of people – he decided, and reasonably so, to restrict his invitation to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and whichever other companions he chose to bring along.

As for the Prophet (pbuh), he was not one to be influenced by such considerations as these. First of all, it would have been unacceptable to him (pbuh) to set himself apart from his companions by enjoying leisure or comfort which they were being denied; secondly, he was not about to place himself at the mercy of the material causes and limitations to which people are accustomed. For God alone is the Cause of causes and their Maker; hence, it would be a simple matter for Him to make a modest amount of food into a banquet, and to bless the little which they had in such a way that it sufficed for the entire community.

Be that as it may, the Prophet (pbuh) knew that he and his comrades enjoyed such unity and solidarity that, just as they had endured tribulations together, no matter how severe, they must likewise share

blessings equally amongst themselves, no matter how meager. Consequently, after sending Jabir back home to get the food ready for them, he (pbuh) turned to speak to the rest of the men, inviting them all to a feast at Jabir's house! And then came the miraculous event, namely, the transformation of Jabir's small she-goat into food that was so copious that it satisfied hundreds of the Prophet's companions, with so much left over that he (pbuh) suggested that Jabir and his wife give it away as charity! This extraordinary miracle performed by the Messenger of God (pbuh) was a divine show of appreciation for the greatness of his love for his companions, and his willingness to look beyond material causes to God's mighty power and authority.

What I would like my readers to do now is to spend some time pondering such divine "endorsements" as these, that is, the supernatural events through which God supported the Prophet (pbuh) and took him beyond the authority of material causes. Such events are among the most important means by which the thoughtful seeker can discern the features of his prophetic persona; I hope, therefore, that my readers will devote as much effort to the study of these occurrences as is devoted by some other people to discounting them.

Fourth: What do you suppose was the wisdom behind his (pbuh) seeking the counsel of some of his Companions concerning whether to propose a peace agreement to the tribe of Ghatafan, offering to give them one-third of the crops of Medina in exchange for their withdrawing their support from the Qurayshites and their allies and refraining from waging war on the Muslims? And what significance does this hold for Islamic legislation?

As for the wisdom to be found in this action by the Prophet (pbuh), it lies in the fact that he (pbuh) wished to ascertain the extent to which his sincere friends were psychologically prepared for such a battle, and to what extent they were relying upon the power of God for victory despite the fact that a huge number of polytheists from a number of different tribes had amassed themselves against the Muslims, not to mention the decision by the tribe of Banu Qurayéah to breach the treaties and covenants which they had concluded with the Prophet (pbuh). As we have seen, it was not the Prophet's custom or wish to lead his followers into any war or venture for which they lacked sufficient courage, or whose value they were not convinced of. Such consultation was one of the principal didactic methods which he (pbuh) employed with his Companions; hence, he (pbuh) proposed this course of action to them, making it clear that this was not a command which he had received from God Almighty, but rather, something which he was willing to do in order to spare them the suffering that would await them if they came face to face with the intrepid polytheists.

As for the significance of this consultation in relation to Islamic legislation, it consists simply in the legitimacy of the principle of consultation concerning matters about which there exists no explicit text in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. However, it does not indicate that it is permissible for Muslims to drive their enemies off their territory by giving them part of their land or its fruits. It is an agreed-upon principle of Islamic law that the actions of the Prophet (pbuh) which may be taken as a basis for legal decisions are those to which no subsequent objection or correction was revealed as part of the Qur'an. However, those actions which involved nothing but consultation and the exchange of opinions are not included here for two reasons: (1) As we have mentioned above, the aim of consultation may have been simply to ascertain what was going on in the minds and hearts of those being consulted, in which case it was merely a didactic method, nothing more; and (2) even if such consultation had led to concrete action, it could have been followed subsequently by a Qur'anic revelation correcting or criticizing it, in which case it would hold no significance for Islamic law.

As we have seen, scholars of the Prophetic biography note that no peace agreement was ever actually signed or witnessed between the Muslims and the tribe of Ghatafan, but that there was simply a discussion of the matter. The reason we mention this point is that there is an unnamed group of people who have

made the bizarre claim that Muslims ought to pay the "head tax", or jizyah to non-Muslims if necessary, based on the further claim that the Prophet (pbuh) consulted with his Companions during the Battle of the Trench as to whether they should do so! Aside from the fact that, as we have explained, the matter about which the Prophet (pbuh) consulted with his Companions cannot be considered a precedent in the area of Islamic law, we fail to see what connection exists between the jizyah and the points which might be agreed upon by two warring parties!

Someone might ask: Suppose the Muslims were obliged, for reasons of weakness, for example, to give up some of their wealth in order to preserve their lives; would they not have the right to do so? In answer to this query, let us note that there are numerous cases in which Muslims have been robbed of their possessions and property, which then have become booty for their enemies. Many are the times when those who deny the truth have assaulted Muslim lands, seizing their resources and securing control over them. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that Muslims do not submit to such treatment of their own free wills or based on some legal ruling based on Islamic law. Rather, they are forced to give up what is theirs without being given any choice in the matter. Nevertheless, they keep watch for the earliest opportunity to reclaim what has been taken from them.

As you are aware, rulings based on Islamic law are not addressed to those who are under duress or deprived of choice any more than they are addressed to the nursling, the young child, or the insane. This being the case, it is futile to bring up a situation which lies beyond the realm of responsible choice and action as though it fell within the same category as those judgments and decisions which are based on persuasion, the exchange of opinions, and the interests of individuals and nations.

Fifth: By what means were the Muslims granted victory, and how were the polytheists defeated in this battle? We have seen that the means to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his Companions resorted at the Battle of Badr was also employed in the Battle of the Trench, namely, humble entreaty to God and repeated supplication for divine aid and support. This, in fact, is the course which was taken time and time again by the Prophet (pbuh) whenever he encountered an enemy or marched out on jihad. After all, this means yields greater effects than all material causes and methods, and unless Muslims rely upon it with the utmost commitment, their affairs will never be set aright.

As for how the polytheists were defeated despite their great numbers once the believers had proved their steadfastness, their patience in adversity, and the sincerity of their pleas to God Almighty, God describes this in His holy book, saying:

O you who believe! Remember God's favor to you when there came against you hosts and We sent against them a wind and (heavenly) forces that you did not see, and God is Ever-Seer of what you do. When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when (your) eyes grew wild and (your) hearts reached to (your) throats, and (when) you were harboring doubts about God.... And God drove back those who disbelieved in their rage, they gained no advantage. God sufficed for the believers in the fighting. And God is Ever All-Strong, All-Mighty" (Qur'an 33: 9-25).

This theme, which recurs repeatedly in the Prophet's various expeditions, does not mean that the Muslims should be tempted to embark on adventures and wars of jihad without making the necessary preparations beforehand. Rather, it is intended to clarify that among the various causes behind victory, the chief cause is sincere reliance upon God and an attitude of humble worship and veneration. If these elements are missing, all the instruments of power in the world will not suffice them. If, on the other hand, this condition is fulfilled among the Muslims, then you can expect manifest miracles of victory to accompany their efforts. Otherwise, whence came this violent wind that shook up the camp of the polytheists without having any effect on the Muslims encamped close by! When it reached the polytheists' camp, it overturned their cooking pots, sent their tents flying, uprooted their tent pegs and shook their hearts with terror, but when it reached the believers' camp, it arrived as a cool, refreshing, harmless breeze.

Sixth: As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) was so occupied during this battle that he missed the ‘asr prayer, then he performed a compensatory prayer after sundown. According to other accounts of this hadith, not found in Muslim and al-Bukhari, he (pbuh) missed more than just the ‘asr prayer, but others as well, then at a later time when he was free to do so, he performed them in succession.

This fact is evidence of the legitimacy of performing a compensatory prayer for a prayer which has been missed for some reason. Nor is this ruling nullified by the view held by some to the effect that delaying a prayer on account of such preoccupation was permitted at that time, and was then abrogated when the prayer of fear was legislated for the Muslim soldiers, be they on foot or on horseback, if the fighting grew too intense between them and the polytheists. The reason for this is that abrogation -- assuming that this ruling was, in fact, abrogated – has no effect on the legitimacy of performing compensatory prayers; rather, it applies only to the permissibility of delaying prayer because one is busy. In other words, the abrogation of the validity of delaying prayer for certain reasons is not, in addition, an abrogation of the permissibility of performing compensatory prayers. Rather, the matter of compensatory prayers is passed over in silence, which means that its legitimacy stands. At the same time, there is conclusive evidence that the prayer of fear was legislated prior to this expedition, as we verified above in our discussion of the Expedition of the Rags.

Further evidence in support of the legitimacy of performing compensatory prayers may be found in a sound hadith narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari according to which, after the Prophet (pbuh) had left the site of the Battle of the Trench and returned to Medina, he (pbuh) instructed his men, saying, “Let no one pray the ‘asr (or the éuhr, that is, the noon prayer) until we have reached Banu Qurayéah.” When the time for prayer arrived as they were still traveling, some of them said, “We are not to pray until we reach our destination,” whereas others said, “No, we should pray. He (pbuh) would not have wanted us to do otherwise.” Hence, the first group performed a compensatory prayer after they reached Banu Qurayéah.

Once we have established the necessity of compensating for obligatory prayers which have been missed, it makes no difference whether the prayer in question was missed due to sleep, neglect, or a deliberate decision not to perform it. We have definitive evidence that one must compensate for any prayer missed; hence, there is no reason to believe that compensatory prayers are only permitted if the prayer was missed for particular reasons and not others. After all, those who did not pray on their way to confront the Banu Qurayéah were neither asleep nor had they forgotten. Hence, it is a mistake to restrict the legitimacy of compensating for prayers missed to those that have been missed for reasons beyond the individual’s control.

Some may have the mistaken impression that the hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) says, “Whoever sleeps through a prayer or forgets to perform it, let him perform it when he remembers it,” indicates that only those who miss a prayer on account of sleep or forgetfulness are allowed to make up for it at a later time. However, this hadith does not mean that only those who forget or sleep through a prayer are to compensate for it later; rather, the emphasis here is upon the phrase, “when he remembers it.” In other words, as is indicated by the interpretation given by hadith scholars and commentators based on its wording and context,[212] the intention is to alert us to the fact that if we miss a prayer for any reason and we wish to make it up, it is not necessary for us to wait until the time for the same prayer the following day. Instead, we should perform the prayer in question as soon as we remember it, no matter what time it happens to be.

The Expedition Against

Banu Qurayéah

It is mentioned by both Muslim and al-Bukhari that when the Prophet (pbuh) had returned from the Battle of the Trench, laid down his arms and bathed, he was visited by Gabriel, may blessings and peace be upon him, who said, "Have you laid down your weapon? By God, we have not laid ours down. Go out to them!"

"Where shall I go?" he (pbuh) asked.

"This way," Gabriel replied, pointing in the direction of Banu Qurayéah.

So the Prophet (pbuh) set out to meet them.[213]

Before they set out, he (pbuh) instructed the Muslims not to pray the 'asr prayer until they had reached Banu Qurayéah. As they traveled, the time for the 'asr prayer arrived, and some of them said, "We shouldn't pray till we reach our destination," whereas others said, "No, we should pray now. He (pbuh) wouldn't have wanted us to do otherwise."

When they had concluded their journey, they mentioned the matter to the Prophet (pbuh), but he did not reprimand any of them.[214]

With Banu Qurayéah entrenched within their fortresses, the Messenger of God (pbuh) kept them under siege for twenty-five nights (and some say fifteen days)[215] until, enervated by the blockade, their hearts were gripped with fear.

Ibn Hisham relates that when Ka'b Ibn As'ad saw that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was not going to put an end to the siege, he said, "O company of Jews, you see what has befallen you. So let me propose three alternatives, and you choose whichever of them you see fit."

"What are they?" they asked.

"The first is for us to follow this man and believe what he says. After all, it has become clear that he is a prophet sent from God, and that he is the one whom you find mentioned in your scriptures. Not only so, but were you to follow him, you would preserve your lives along with the lives of your wives and children."

They replied, "We will never abandon the rule of the Torah."

"So, then," Ka'b said to them, "let us kill our children and our wives, then go out against Muhammad and his companions with our swords unsheathed. This way, we will not have left behind us any burden, and God will judge between us and Muhammad. If we perish, we perish, and we will not have left behind any progeny to worry about."

"But what have they done to deserve such a fate?" they protested.

"If you refuse to do this as well," Ka'b continued, "then note that tonight is the eve of the Sabbath, and

that on this account, Muhammad and his men may have decided not to fight against us on this day. So you could go down against him and take them by surprise."

However, they rejected this idea as well.

The Jews then decided to submit to whatever judgment the Prophet (pbuh) issued concerning them. Banu Qurayéah had an alliance with the tribe of Banu Aws; hence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) wished to assign the task of issuing the judgment to a chieftain of the Aws tribe, and the man he chose from among them was Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh. Sa'd had been injured by an arrow at the Battle of the Trench, and he was being treated for his wound in a tent there; hence, when the Messenger of God (pbuh) appointed him judge over Banu Qurayéah and sent him word to this effect, he came on a donkey. As Sa'd approached the mosque,[216] he (pbuh) told the Helpers, "Rise to meet your leader."

Then he (pbuh) told Sa'd, "The Jews have agreed to submit to whatever verdict you reach."

Sa'd replied, "Let their fighting men be killed, and take their dependents captive."

"I bow to the judgment of God Almighty," said the Prophet (pbuh).[217]

Then Sa'd, may God be pleased with him, said, "O Lord, You know that there is no people I would be more eager to wage war on for your sake than those who have given the lie to Your Apostle (pbuh) and expelled him from their midst. O Lord, I believe that you have ended the war between us and them (that is, Quraysh and the other polytheists). So, if there are any more wars to be fought against the Quraysh, allow me to live long enough to fight them for Your sake. But if You have brought the war to an end, cause my wound to open once again and allow me to die from it."

It was following this that Sa'd's wound burst open from the middle of his upper chest. Not long after this, there was a group of men from the tribe of Banu Ghifar gathered under an arbor in the mosque courtyard when, to their surprise and alarm, they saw blood flowing out toward them.

The others in the mosque at the time said to them, "What is this that is approaching us from your direction?!"

Meanwhile, Sa'd's wound continued to bleed until he died, may God be pleased with him.[218]

According to Ahmad's account of the same hadith, when Sa'd's wound reopened, it had healed over except for a small area the size of an earring.

The Jews were then brought out of their fortresses and led to trenches in Medina, where their fighting men were put to death and their dependents were taken captive. Among those who were led to their death was Huyayy Ibn Akhtab, who had convinced Banu Qurayéah to betray the Muslims and go against their covenants with them. Ibn Ishaq relates that he was brought to the Messenger of God (pbuh) with his hands bound to his neck. When he looked at the Messenger of God (pbuh), he said, "I swear to God, I have no regrets over having been your enemy. But whoever betrays God, will be betrayed."

Then he sat down and was beheaded.

Lessons and Principles

Significant principles have been derived from this story by scholars of the Prophetic Traditions and biography, which we summarize as follows:

First: The permissibility of waging war on those who abrogate a covenant with the Muslims. Imam Muslim, may God have mercy on him, has made these words the heading for his account of the war against

Banu Qurayéah. Peace agreements, treaties, and covenants of mutual protection must be respected by Muslims under all circumstances unless the other party to such a pact takes the initiative to violate them, in which case it is permissible for Muslims to go to war against them if they see that this is in the best interest of the Muslim community.

Second: The legitimacy of resorting to arbitration with respect to Muslims' affairs. According to al-Nawawi, may God have mercy upon him, this principle holds true for the major tasks assigned to Muslims and other affairs of significance to them, on condition that the authority to issue the relevant judgment be granted to a fair-minded Muslim who is qualified to act in this capacity. There is unanimous agreement on this principle among Muslim scholars as it relates to the Kharijites, who refused to recognize the arbitration of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, who established proof against them. This ruling also includes the legitimacy of concluding peace with the inhabitants of a village or some other community on the basis of the judgment issued by a Muslim ruler who is just, competent to act in the capacity of judge, and a man of integrity. Such a person has the duty to issue a ruling which is consistent with the Muslims' best interests, and once his judgment has been handed down, it is binding such that neither the imam nor the Muslim community may go back on it, though they may retreat before a judgment has been issued.[219]

Third: The legitimacy of forming independent judgments on subsidiary issues, and the necessity of disagreements over these same issues. The disagreement which took place among the Companions over how to interpret the words of the Prophet (pbuh) when he told them, "Let no one pray the 'asr, or mid-afternoon prayer, until we have reached Banu Qurayéah," in addition to the fact that the Messenger of God (pbuh) reprimanded none of them for his particular interpretation, offers us significance evidence in support of one of the major principles of Islamic jurisprudence, namely, the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of differences over questions pertaining to secondary matters. When such differences arise, the holder of each of the various points of view is to be treated as worthy of a reward from God, and this whether we hold that there is only one correct view, or more than one. At the same time, it highlights the permissibility of forming independent judgments when deriving legal rulings from the evidence at hand. This incident thus points to the fact that it would be impossible – in fact, unimaginable – to eradicate disagreements over subsidiary issues concerning which all we possess is speculative evidence.

God Almighty has mandated His servants to accomplish two tasks: (1) to carry out specific, explicit commands relating to doctrine and practice, and (2) to exert the necessary effort to comprehend the subsidiary principles and precepts of Islam based on the various types of evidence available. Thus, for example, if a person finds himself stranded in a desert and the time for prayer overtakes him, he is not required to reach complete certainty concerning which direction the qiblah lies before he prays. Rather, all he is required to do is to exhibit a spirit of submission and obedience by doing his best to ascertain in which direction the qiblah lies based on whatever evidence is at hand, then, when he finds himself inclined to pray in a certain direction, to turn in that direction and pray.

In addition, there is profound wisdom to be found in the fact that most of the legal texts from which Islamic principles and precepts are derived are texts which serve as merely speculative evidence rather than as conclusive proof of one position or another. For this reason, it is possible for all of the diverse independent judgments formed on a particular question to be closely based upon legally recognized evidence such that Muslims are free to adopt whichever of them best suits their particular circumstances and perceived interests. This is one of the most eloquent expressions of God's mercy toward His servants in all times and places.

Thus, in addition to be an exercise in futility, attempts to do away with differences of opinion over the subsidiary issues of Islam reveal a kind of stubborn resistance to the divine wisdom and planning at work in God's laws. After all, how could we guarantee success in eradicating disagreements over a particular question as long as the evidence upon which the differing views are based is speculative and probable?

Moreover, if anyone could accomplish such a feat, it would have been the Prophet's Companions themselves. Why, then, did they disagree?

Fourth: The Jews' certainty of Muhammad's prophethood. As can be seen from the conversation which took place between Ka'b Ibn As'ad and his fellow Jews, they were certain of Muhammad's prophethood, and they were fully aware of the mention made of him (pbuh) in the Torah, including descriptions of his distinguishing characteristics and his mission. Nevertheless, they were slaves to their tribal loyalties and pride. This is the cause behind the disbelief of many of those who pretend not to believe or understand. At the same time, it provides clear evidence that in its doctrine and its precepts, Islam is, in truth, the religion which stands in harmony with our pristine, inborn human nature.

Islam's doctrinal teachings are consonant with with reason, and in its laws and precepts with human beings' genuine needs and interests. Hence, you will be hard-pressed to find a sensible person who has heard about Islam as it really is, then denied its truth based on sincere motives and sound reasoning. Rather, one of two things will have happened in such a case: Either the person did not hear about Islam as it truly is, but was told untruths about it; or, after becoming familiar with its truths and its true essence, he chose to reject it for emotional reasons, such as a bitterness toward Muslims or some earthly passion or aim which he fears that, were he to embrace Islam, he could not fulfill.

Fifth: The ruling in favor of rising in honor of someone who is approaching. When Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh approached on his mount, the Prophet (pbuh) instructed the Helpers to rise in his honor "... for your leader." Based on these words as well as other evidence, most Islamic scholars have concluded that it is a legitimate practice to honor righteous people and scholars by rising upon their arrival on those occasions where custom would call for this type of reception.

Commenting upon this hadith, Imam al-Nawawi states, "This hadith provides support for honoring men of erudition and virtue by rising to greet them when they approach. The majority of Islamic scholars have understood this hadith in a similar way. As al-Qadi states, 'This does not refer to the type of rising which is forbidden, namely, rising in honor of someone when he himself is sitting down and then continuing to stand as he remains seated.' As I have stated, then, rising to greet a person of erudition and virtue when he approaches is a desirable practice, and there are hadiths which support this without there being any explicit texts to the contrary."[220]

One hadith which likewise provides support for this practice is the account related by Ka'b Ibn Malik about his staying back from the Battle of Tabuk and what happened thereafter. He says, "When I betook myself to the Prophet (pbuh), people came forward in droves to greet me, congratulating me on my repentance and saying, 'May you enjoy great blessing now that God has turned toward you and forgiven you!' Then I entered the mosque, where I saw people seated around the Prophet (pbuh). When Talhah Ibn 'Ubayd Allah, may God be pleased with him, saw me, he rose and rushed over to shake my hand and congratulate me. He was the only one of the Emigrants who rose to greet me." Ka'b always remained grateful to Talhah for this gesture.

In a similar vein, we have the following hadith, which is narrated by al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and al-Bukhari in his book Al-Adab al-Mufrad on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, who said, "I never knew anyone more similar to the Prophet (pbuh) in terms of speaking and way of talking or sitting than Fatimah. Whenever the Prophet (pbuh) saw her approaching, he would rise and kiss her, then take her by the hand and sit her down in his seat. And she, whenever the Prophet (pbuh) came to see her, would rise and kiss him."[221]

None of this, however, stands in conflict with the sound hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) says, "Whoever wishes to have others rise for him, let him take his seat in Hell-fire." This is because the legitimacy of honoring and showing reverence for the virtuous does not require that they themselves seek out such

treatment or be inwardly attached thereto. On the contrary, one of the most salient characteristics of the truly righteous and noble is that they are humble in their manner of relating to their brethren, and that they abstain from seeking out such honor. Take, for example, the needy, indigent individual; Islamic etiquette urges such a person to rise above the temptation to ask for charity or to reveal his poverty and neediness to others. At the same time, however, this same ethic urges the wealthy to seek out such self-restrained poor, to honor them, and to give them of their surplus. Hence, each situation has an associated ethic and task, and the two should not be confused. Nor should we allow either of them to cancel out the other, since this is one of the worst forms of indiscretion and ignorance.

However, one should realize that this legitimate manner of showing honor has limits and that, if these limits are transgressed, it turns into wrongdoing both for those who take part in it and for those who fail to speak out against it. An example of such a transgression is the practice, in some Sufi gatherings, of having the adepts remain standing even as the sheikh remains seated, then having one of them stand before his sheikh in brokenness and subservience, not daring even to raise his head until his sheikh has granted him permission to sit down. Another, similar, practice is for the adepts to go crawling toward the sheikh when he arrives at the gathering. Nor should one be deceived by the justifications offered for such practices, for example, that they are a method of training for the adept! Islam has laid down methods and programs for the purpose of education and training and has instructed Muslims not to depart from them. Moreover, no other approach to education can compare favorably with that adopted by the Prophet (pbuh) himself.

Sixth: The distinguished status granted to Sa‘d Ibn Mu‘adh. As you learn about this battle, you become familiar with a special position which was given to Sa‘d, may God be pleased with him. This may be seen, first of all, in the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) gave him the authority to issue a definitive verdict concerning the fates of Banu Qurayéah. Not only so, but even though he was the Messenger of God (pbuh), he made it clear that he was prepared to agree with and support whatever Sa‘d’s verdict happened to be. It may be seen, secondly, in the command given by the Prophet (pbuh) to the Helpers to rise to greet him when he approached them, since a command such as this coming from none other than the Prophet (pbuh) could only be seen as a significant prerogative for Sa‘d.

The special status enjoyed by Sa‘d may also be seen in the story of the wound he had suffered at the Battle of the Trench. At the time he was wounded, he lifted his hands in supplication, saying to God, “O Lord, You know that there is no people I would be more eager to wage war on for your sake than those who have given the lie to Your Apostle (pbuh) and expelled him from their midst. O Lord, I believe that you have brought to an end the war between us and them. If there are any more wars to be fought against the Quraysh, allow me to live long enough to fight them for Your sake!” And in fact, Sa‘d’s prayer was answered, in that his wound began to heal over. Then, when the confrontation with Banu Qurayéah took place and the Messenger of God (pbuh) appointed him as judge over them -- thereby protecting the believers from any further harm that might have befallen them on account of the Jews and cleansing Medina of their iniquity -- Sa‘d raised his hands in prayer to God once more, saying, “O Lord, I believe that You have ended the fighting between us and them (i.e., Quraysh and the other polytheists)... But if You have brought the war to an end, cause my wound to open once again and allow me to die from it.” And that very night, his wound burst open and he died, may God have mercy upon him.

Ibn Hajar states in Fath al-Bari, “It appears that Sa‘d’s belief was correct, and that his prayer was answered, because from the time of the Battle of the Trench, no fighting took place between the Muslims and the Qurayshites, at least not at the polytheists’ initiative. When the Prophet (pbuh) prepared himself to undertake the lesser pilgrimage, he was prevented from entering Mecca. At this point, fighting nearly broke out between them, but it did not. As God Almighty says, ‘And He it is who, in the valley of Mecca, stayed their hands from you, and your hands from them, after He had enabled you to vanquish them; and

God saw indeed what you were doing' (Qur'an 48: 24). Following this a truce was concluded, and the Messenger of God (pbuh) completed the lesser pilgrimage the following year. This situation then continued until the Qurayshites violated the covenant, at which time the Prophet (pbuh) set out against them and Mecca was conquered."[222]

Al-Bukhari narrates that as he was departing from the Battle of the Trench, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Now we shall attack them, not they us, and we shall set out against them." Based on a good chain of narrators,[223] al-Bazzar narrates the hadith of Jabir according to which, addressing a large gathering following the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "After this, they will attack you no more; instead, you shall attack them."

Lastly, let us note that this story about Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, with all the associated circumstances which we have mentioned, is a reminder that defensive war in Islam was nothing but one phase of the mission which was carried forward by the Messenger of God (pbuh). This phase was followed by the phase in which all people without exception were invited to embrace Islam. What this meant, among other things, was that nothing would be accepted from atheists and polytheists but Islam, that is, complete submission to the One God; as for the People of the Book, that is, Christians and the Jews, nothing would be accepted from them but either entry into Islam, or submission to its public rule. At the same time, this phase involved waging war -- if possible, and only after exhausting all peaceful means of persuading others to embrace Islam -- against everyone who attempted to prevent Islam from fulfilling its mission.

Now that Islamic ordinances have been brought to completion as they pertain to jihad and the mission to spread Islam, it makes no sense to speak of what is referred to as the "defensive war" which has become such a popular theme of late among certain thinkers; otherwise, what did the Prophet (pbuh) mean when he said, "instead, you shall attack them"?

Section Six
The Conquest:
Preliminary Events and Outcames

A New Phase of the Mission:
The Truce of al-Hudaybiyah

The Truce of al-Hudaybiyah was concluded in the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah, toward the end of the year 6 A.H. The Prophet (pbuh) had announced to the Muslims that he would be traveling to Mecca to perform the minor pilgrimage. When he departed, he was accompanied by a large company of Helpers and Emigrants which numbered approximately 1,400 men. While they were on their way, he (pbuh) entered into the state of ritual consecration[224] and led along with him the animals which he intended to offer in sacrifice, thereby protecting the people from attack and making it clear that he had come in order to visit the Ka'bah and express his reverence for its sacred precincts.

When he (pbuh) arrived at Dhu al-Hulayfah, the Prophet sent out a spy from the tribe of Khuza'ah by the name of Bishr Ibn Sufyan with instructions to bring back news about the people of Mecca. The Prophet (pbuh) then marched on until he came to Ghadir al-Ashtat, where the spy returned to report what he had learned. He said, "The Qurayshites have gathered an entire army to come out against you, including the Ahabish, for they intend to wage war on you and prevent you from reaching the Ka'bah."

"Advise me, men," the Prophet (pbuh) said.

Then Abu Bakr said, "O Messenger of God, you came out in order to visit the Ka'bah, not wishing to kill or fight anyone. So continue toward your destination, and if anyone seeks to prevent you from it, we will fight him."

"Proceed, then, in the name of God," replied the Apostle (pbuh).

Then he (pbuh) said, "Who of you can take us out along a path other than the one which the Qurayshites will be traveling?"

A man from the tribe of Banu Aslam replied, "I will, O Messenger of God."

Thereupon, the man led them along a rugged path among the mountain passes. They continued traveling until, when they came to the Mirar Trail (a mountain path which overlooks al-Hudaybiyah), the Prophet's she-camel kneeled. The others began to chide the animal, saying, "Get up! Get going!" But it refused to budge.

Then they said, "Qaswa'[225] is balking for no reason."

But the Prophet (pbuh) objected, saying, "No, it isn't like her to do that. Rather, she is being held back by God, just the way Abrahah's elephant once was.[226] By the One who holds my soul in His hand, whenever they ask me for a way in which to honor God's commands, I give it to them."

He reprimanded the camel and it jumped up. Then he changed direction and (instead of continuing toward Mecca), he encamped on the outskirts of al-Hudaybiyah near a well with very little water in it. Before long, the people had used up the water and began complaining to the Messenger of God (pbuh) that they were thirsty.

Thereupon, he (pbuh) pulled an arrow out of his quiver and told them to place it in the well. And sure

enough, the water began to gush out so copiously that they stopped coming back for more.[227]

Meanwhile, Budayl Ibn Warqa' al-Khuza'i approached with a group of men and said, "I saw Ka'b Ibn Lu'ayy and Amir Ibn Lu'ayy encamped beside the waters of al-Hudaybiyah. They have brought with them she-camels who are still nursing their young,[228] and they plan to fight you and prevent you from approaching the Ka'bah."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, "We have not come to fight anyone but rather, simply to perform the minor pilgrimage. As for the Qurayshites, they have been exhausted by war and stand to gain nothing through it. If they wish, I am willing to delay my pilgrimage for a period of time in return for their allowing me to deal with my people as I see fit. If I am victorious and they wish to enter into (treaties) as others have done, they are free to do so, in which case they will most certainly be relieved. Otherwise, I swear by the One who holds my life in His hands that I will fight them to the death over this matter, then let God carry out His will."

Budayl replied, "I will inform them of what you have said."

Budayl then went to inform the Qurayshites of what he been told by the Messenger of God (pbuh). When the Qurayshites heard what Budayl had to say, a man by the name of 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud rose and proposed that he go to see the Messenger of God (pbuh) and hear in detail what Budayl Ibn Waraqa' had told them about.

"You are free to do so," they told them.

So 'Urwah went to see the Prophet (pbuh), who told him the same things he had told Budayl.

'Urwah replied, "Suppose you were to wipe out your whole army. Have you ever heard of an Arab going to war against his own people before? I swear by God, I don't see men of distinction. Rather, I see before me a mix of commoners who would be prepared to flee and abandon you."

Hearing this, Abu Bakr replied, "You can go suck al-Lat![229] Are we people who would run away and abandon him?!"

Gesturing in Abu Bakr's direction, 'Urwah asked, "And who is that?"

"His name is Abu Bakr," he was told.

"If it weren't for a favor you did me once,[230] I'd give you what you deserve for that," 'Urwah retorted.

Then he began speaking to the Prophet (pbuh), and whenever he spoke, he took hold of his (pbuh) beard. However, a man by the name of al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah was standing at the Prophet's head, wearing a coat of mail that extended from his neck to below his knees and holding a sword in his hand. Every time 'Urwah reached out to grab the Prophet's beard, al-Mughirah would strike his hand with the scabbard of his sword.

Finally al-Mughirah told him, "Get your hand off the Messenger of God's beard."

Looking up, 'Urwah asked, "And who might this be?"

"His name is al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah," they told him.

"What a traitor you are! Wasn't it only yesterday that you mended your ways?"[231]

Then, looking at the Prophet's Companions with new eyes, 'Urwah said, "Hardly has this man expectorated before one of them catches the spittle in his hand and rubs his face or his skin with it. When he gives them a command, they obey it, and when he does his ablutions, they nearly kill each other to get the benefit of the water that had contact with his body. When they speak, they lower their voices in his

presence, and they hold him in such high regard, they won't look him in the eye."

He then went back to his comrades and said, "O my people! I've entered the presence of kings, and I've visited Caesar, Khosrau, and the Emperor of Ethiopia. By God, never in my life have I seen a ruler who is loved and honored by his subjects the way Muhammad is loved and honored by his companions! Besides which, he is proposing a wise plan which you would do well to accept."

The Qurayshites then sent to the Prophet (pbuh) a man by the name of Suhayl Ibn 'Amr as their representative, to participate in drawing up a written peace agreement between them and the Muslims. When Suhayl sat down with the Messenger of God (pbuh), he said, "Let us draw up a treaty amongst ourselves."

So the Prophet (pbuh) called for his scribe (who, according to Muslim's account, was 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him).

The Prophet (pbuh) then said, "Write, 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious (al-Rahman), the Dispenser of Grace (al-Rahim).'"

Suhayl replied, "As for al-Rahman, I have no idea what that means. Instead, write, 'In Your name, O God.'"

The Muslims replied, "We will never write anything but 'In the name of God, al-Rahman, al-Rahim'!"

But the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Write, 'In Your name, O God.'"

Then he (pbuh) continued, "Write, 'This is what is demanded by Muhammad, the Messenger of God.'"

To this Suhayl replied, "If we were convinced that you were the Messenger of God, we would not have prevented you from coming to the Ka'bah, and we would not have fought against you. Instead write, 'Muhammad, son of 'Abdullah.'"

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, saying, "I am the Messenger of God, whether you believe me or not! Nevertheless, write, 'Muhammad, son of 'Abdullah.'"

(According to Muslim's account, he (pbuh) ordered 'Ali to strike out the original phrase, but 'Ali refused. So the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Show me where the phrase is." So 'Ali showed it to him, and he struck it out himself.)

The Prophet (pbuh) then said, "Write, 'It is agreed that you will give me free access to the Ka'bah to perform circumambulations around it.'"

Suhayl replied, "We are not about to let the other Arabs say that we were pressured into anything! However, you may visit the Ka'bah beginning next year, and on condition that the Muslims keep their swords in their scabbards."

Then he wrote what they had agreed upon.

Then Suhayl said, "And write, 'It is agreed upon that any man of ours who comes to you, even if he has embraced your religion, will be returned to us, and that any man of yours who comes to us, we will keep.'"

"For God's sake!" the Muslims exclaimed, "How can a man who has become a Muslim be sent back among polytheists?!"

(At this point, they turned to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and asked him, "Are we really supposed to agree to this, O Messenger of God?!"

"Yes, you are," he (pbuh) told them. "Whoever leaves us to go to them, has been rejected by God already. And as for one who comes to us from them, God will provide him with a way out of his predicament.")[232]

Based on these terms, the period of the peace agreement was to be ten years according the accounts passed

down to us by Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, and al-Hakim. During this period of time, there were to be no violations or thefts of any sort between the parties concerned. Given the truce and its conditions, whoever wished to enter into an alliance with the Qurayshites was free to do so. Once they heard this, the tribe of Khuza'ah announced without hesitation, "We pledge our allegiance to Muhammad!" At the same time, the tribe of Banu Bakr made haste to declare, "We pledge our allegiance to Quraysh!"

When the treaty had been drawn up, he (pbuh) called upon men from among both the Muslims and the polytheists to be witnesses to the written agreement. We read in both Muslim and al-Bukhari that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab said:

I came to the Prophet of God (pbuh) and said, "Are you not truly God's Prophet?"

"Yes, I am," he replied.

"Are you not in the right while our enemy is in the wrong?"

"That is correct," he said.

"Aren't our slain in Heaven while theirs are in Hell?"

"Yes, they are," he said.

"Why, then, do we offer concessions where our religion is concerned?" I asked.

He replied, saying, "I am God's Messenger. I would never disobey Him, and He is the One who gives me succor and victory."

"Did you not used to tell us that we would come to the Ka'bah and perform circumambulation around it?"

"Yes, I did. But did I tell you that you would do so this year?"

"No, you did not," I answered.

"So, then," he said, "you will indeed come to the Ka'bah and circumambulate its sacred precincts."

Following this conversation, 'Umar still felt so impatient, he came to Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, and asked him the same questions that he had asked the Prophet (pbuh).

Abu Bakr said to him, "O son of al-Khattab! He is, indeed, the Messenger of God, and he would never disobey his Lord's command, nor would his Lord ever allow him to go astray!"

It was not long after this that the 48th chapter of the Qur'an entitled, "Victory" was revealed to the Messenger of God (pbuh), whereupon he (pbuh) sent for 'Umar and recited it to him.

"O Messenger of God!" 'Umar said, "Does this mean we will be granted victory?"

"Yes, it does," he (pbuh) replied.

And with this, 'Umar was satisfied.[233]

The Prophet (pbuh) then came to his Companions and said to them, "Rise, slaughter your sacrificial animals, and shave your heads."

He (pbuh) repeated this command three times. However, they all remained silent and morose, and not one of them made a move to get up. The Prophet (pbuh) then went in to see his wife, Umm Salamah, and he mentioned to her the treatment he had received from his people.

"O Messenger of God," she replied, "Does this please you? If not, then go back out and say nothing to any of them. Instead, simply slaughter your own sacrificial animal, then call your barber to shave your head."

So, taking her advice, he (pbuh) went out and said nothing to anyone until he had done as she had said: He slaughtered his sacrificial animal, then called for his barber to shave his head. When his followers saw

what he had done, they got up and slaughtered their own animals and began shaving each other's heads. In fact, they nearly killed each other, so vexed were they over the events that had just transpired.

After the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions had returned to Medina, certain Qurayshite women came to the Muslims professing their acceptance of Islam. Among them was Umm Kulthum, daughter of 'Uqbah. It was in this context that God Almighty revealed the words, "O you who believe! Whenever believing women come to you as emigrants, examine them, God knows best as to their faith, then if you know them for true believers, do not send them back to the disbelievers, they are not lawful (wives) for the disbelievers nor are the disbelievers lawful (husbands) to them" (Qur'an 60: 10).

Hence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) refused to send the women back to the unbelievers.[234]

The Pledge of Allegiance at al-Ridwan

Before the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah was drawn up in writing, the Prophet (pbuh) had sent 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan to the Qurayshites in order to discuss the matter with them. However, the Qurayshites held 'Uthman captive for a period of time, and during this time, a report reached the Prophet (pbuh) that 'Uthman had been slain.

In response, he (pbuh) said, "We shall not leave this place until we have gone to battle with them."

He (pbuh) then called for a new pledge of allegiance, and it was concluded under a tree at a location known as al-Ridwan. One at a time, he (pbuh) took each Companion by the hand, and each of them pledged not to flee. Then the Messenger of God (pbuh) took his own hand and said, "This is on 'Uthman's behalf."

After this pledge was concluded, news reached the Messenger of God (pbuh) that the report of 'Uthman's death had been false.

Lessons and Principles

Before we go into detail concerning the lessons and principles to be derived from the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, allow us to note briefly that this treaty was evidence of unadulterated divine providence, a providence by means of which the work and effects of prophethood were manifested more unmistakably than in any act which the Prophet (pbuh) had undertaken before. Its successful outcome is a mystery linked to those realities which are accessible to the divine knowledge alone. As a consequence, it was more a source of bewilderment to the Muslims than a product of their own thinking and planning, and it is for this reason that we view this treaty – including the preliminary events which led up to it, the content of the agreement itself, and its subsequent outcomes – as one of the most important elements which served to shape and confirm Islamic doctrine.

We shall first discuss the magnificent divine wisdom to be found in this treaty and which subsequently became clear for all to see as one of God's dazzling signs. Then we shall turn our attention to the legal rulings which may be derived from the events associated with it. As for the divine wisdom revealed through this truce, it consists in the fact that, as Ibn al-Qayyim observes, it served as a key to the conquest of Mecca. And in fact, God Almighty virtually always paves the way for those events which He has willed to bring to pass, using such preliminary developments as harbingers of what is to come. If the Muslims were not aware of this fact at that time, this is simply because the future was unknown to them. After all, how could they have perceived the link between the reality which was visible to them, and the unknown future which they had no way of imagining?

However, it wasn't long before the Muslims began to sense the significance of this treaty and the great blessing which it stood to provide. First of all, by means of this truce, the former warring sides now guaranteed one another's' safety; as a result, the Muslims could now mix with the unbelievers: calling them to embrace Islam, reciting the Qur'an to them, and presenting their arguments in favor of Islam openly and without fear. It was during this period as well that many individuals who had believed in Islam

secretly began to profess their new faith in public.

Ibn Hisham relates the following commentary on the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, on the authority of al-Zuhri, who says: Never before had there been a victory for Islam the likes of this one. For now the battles took place where people met to converse. When the truce was concluded, war came to an end and people guaranteed one another's safety, meeting together to exchange ideas through conversation and debate. Islam was explained to no sensibly-minded person but that he entered its fold, and during those two years, the number of people who became Muslims equaled, and perhaps exceeded, the number who had done so before.

It is for this reason that the Qur'an refers to the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah as a "victory," where God Almighty declares:

"Indeed, God shall fulfill the true vision which He showed to His Messenger in very truth: certainly you shall enter the Inviolable House of Worship (Al-Masjid al-Haram), if God so wills, secure, having your heads shaved or your hair cut short, with no fear: for He has (always) known that which you yourselves could not know. And He has ordained (for you), besides this, a victory soon to come" (Qur'an 48: 27).

Another way in which this treaty reveals the divine wisdom is that by means of it, God highlighted the distinction between the revelation associated with prophethood and the planning accomplished by mere human thought; between the divinely granted success enjoyed by the prophet sent by God, and the conduct of a genius; between the divine inspiration which comes from beyond the realm of worldly causes and manifestations, and being pulled along by the force of such causes. It was the will of God Almighty to confirm the prophethood of His Apostle, Muhammad (pbuh) to every rational, thoughtful human being. Perhaps this helps in part to explain the divine words that, "God will help you with (His) great help" (Qur'an 48: 3); in other words, it would be a unique victory with the capacity to release people from lack of awareness and misguided ways of thinking.

It was with this understanding that the Prophet (pbuh) granted the polytheists all the conditions they demanded, showing lenience toward them for which none of his Companions could see any justification. We have seen how distressed and anxious 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab became as a result. However, Ahmad and others relate that later, he said, "I kept praying, giving charity, and freeing slaves in the hopes of making some sort of expiation for what I said that day." Similarly, we have seen the apprehensive silence which came over the Muslims when the Apostle (pbuh) instructed them to shave their heads and slaughter their sacrificial animals in preparation to return to Medina, and this despite the fact that he repeated the command three times. The reason behind their silence was that the Companions, may God be pleased with them, were still puzzling over the course of action which the Prophet (pbuh) had taken. Judging it on the basis of the concrete experiences to which their minds had been exposed thus far, they were only capable of seeing it from their vantage point as ordinary, earthbound human beings. The Prophet (pbuh), by contrast, was able to view his actions from a vantage point that lay beyond ordinary human knowledge and experience. It was prophethood alone which was guiding and inspiring him, and his thoughts were focused exclusively upon one thing, namely, the fulfillment of God's commands.

This same fact becomes clear from the reply which he (pbuh) gave to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab when he came to him full of questions and incredulity, and perhaps even some indignation as well. He (pbuh) told him, "I am the Messenger of God. I would never disobey Him, and He is the One who gives me succor and victory." It also becomes clear from the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) sent 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan to Mecca in order to speak with the Qurayshites concerning the purpose for which he (pbuh) had come; he also instructed 'Uthman to meet with believing men and women in Mecca, announcing to them the good news of the Muslims' approaching victory in order that none of them would have to conceal his or her faith any longer.

It is no wonder that the Muslims were astonished at the Prophet's position on this matter, since they were

judging it on the basis of merely human understanding and perspectives. However, it wasn't long before their astonishment and distress had dissipated and the mysterious had become comprehensible, since after the treaty had been concluded, the Prophet (pbuh) received Chapter 48 of the Qur'an, entitled "Victory," and recited it to them. It was then that the Companions understood that their acceptance of the terms of the truce had been, in actual fact, a victory for them, and that despite the power and mastery which the truce had appeared to grant the polytheists, it had actually been a source of disgrace and defeat to them. And through all of this, God manifested the greatness of the victory He had granted to His Messenger and to the believers without their human reason or thoughts playing any part therein.

Could one find evidence for Muhammad's prophethood more eloquent or powerful than this?

The Muslims, as we have seen, were alarmed at first by the Prophet's acceptance of the condition dictated by Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, "that any Qurayshite who comes to Muhammad without permission by his master will be returned to him, whereas any of Muhammad's people who comes to the Qurayshites will be allowed to stay." They became even more alarmed when Abu Jandal (the son of Suhayl Ibn 'Amr) fled from the polytheists and came to the Muslims in shackles.

Abu Jandal's father grabbed him by the collar and said, "O Muhammad, the issue had been settled between us before this man came to you!"

"That is correct," he (pbuh) replied.

Suhayl Ibn 'Amr then started to drag Abu Jandal away in order to return him to the Qurayshites, with Abu Jandal shouting at the top of his lungs, "O company of Muslims! Am I to be sent back to the polytheists so that they can go on tempting me to abandon my faith?!"

"O Abu Jandal!" the Prophet (pbuh) said to him, "Have patience and anticipate the reward you are to receive from your Lord, for God will provide a way of release for you and others who, like you, are weak and oppressed. We have made pledges to the people, and we will not betray them."

Despite these words of reassurance, the incident caused the Companions a great deal of apprehension. But what happened after this? After the Prophet (pbuh) had gone back to Medina, another Qurayshite man who had embraced Islam, by the name of Abu Basir, came to him. The Qurayshites sent two polytheists to bring Abu Basir back, and the Apostle (pbuh) handed him over to them. They took him away and traveled until, when they had reached Dhu al-Hulayfah, Abu Basir caught one of his captors off guard, took his sword, and killed him. His other captor fled, and Abu Basir came back to the Messenger of God, saying, "O Prophet of God, God himself has fulfilled your responsibility for you! You returned me to the polytheists, then God rescued me from them."

Abu Basir then went to a place by the name of Sif al-Bahr. While he was there, Abu Jandal managed to escape and join him there. From that time on, Sif al-Bahr became a gathering place and refuge for Muslims from Mecca; whenever any of the Qurayshites embraced Islam, he would make his way to Abu Basir and his brethren. Moreover, whenever they heard of a Qurayshite caravan that had gone out toward Syria, they would intercept it, kill the polytheists guiding the caravan, and take their wealth. Quraysh then sent to the Messenger of God (pbuh), imploring him in the name of God and His mercy to take these men under his own care. Hence, they left Sif al-Bahr and went to Medina.[235] When Mecca was conquered, it was this same Abu Jandal who sought protection for his father and lived, may God be pleased with him, until he was martyred at the Battle of al-Yamamah.[236]

And thus it was that the Prophet's Companions overcame this anxiety of theirs, and grew in faith in both

the divine wisdom and the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). It is narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari that Suhayl Ibn Sa'id, may God be pleased with him, said on the day of Siffin, "O people, always be wary of your judgements on things. I was there the day Abu Jandal came to us as a Muslim, and if I could have disobeyed the Prophet's command to send him back to the Qurayshites, I would have!"

Again, we ask: Could one find evidence for Muhammad's prophethood more eloquent or powerful than this?

Still another aspect of the divine wisdom made manifest in this truce is that by means of it, God paved the way for the conquest of Mecca at the hands of His Prophet (pbuh) such that, rather than being a conquest filled with bloodshed, it would be a conquest of mercy and peace; a conquest in which people would, quickly and of their own accord, come to an acceptance of the religion of God; a conquest in which those who had persecuted and expelled the Prophet (pbuh) would now submit themselves to him as repentant believers in the one God. It was to this end that God provided the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah as a kind of preliminary phase during which the Qurayshites could come to their senses, examine their consciences, and learn the lessons offered by this treaty, including both the events which led up to it and its subsequent outcomes. For in so doing, their thinking would mature in such a way that they would be better prepared to accept the unrivaled truth.

And this, in fact, is what happened, as we shall see in greater detail below, God willing.

Thus far we have discussed the various ways in which the divine wisdom made itself visible in the events associated with the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah. Let us now turn our attention to the legal rulings and principles to be derived from these same events.

First: Seeking the assistance of non-Muslims in endeavors other than actual warfare. As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) sent out a man by the name of Bishr Ibn Sufyan as a spy to bring him news about the Qurayshites; however, Bishr Ibn Sufyan was a polytheist of the tribe of Khuza'ah. This confirms what we have mentioned previously to the effect that whether it is permissible to receive assistance from non-Muslims depends upon two factors: (1) the circumstances, and (2) what is known about the particular non-Muslims in question. Hence, if the non-Muslims in question are trustworthy and there is no reason to expect them to engage in treachery, then it is permissible to make use of their assistance; otherwise, it is not. Be that as it may, in all the cases in which the Prophet (pbuh) sought assistance from non-Muslims, he did so only in non-combat situations, such as sending someone out as an informer to bring him news of the enemy, borrowing weapons, and so forth. Based on this, it appears that receiving non-Muslims' assistance in peaceful activities is more acceptable than doing so in actual combat.

Second: The nature of consultation (shurá) in Islam. As we have seen, most of the actions take by the Apostle (pbuh) support the legitimacy of consultation and the need for the Muslim ruler to maintain this practice. As for the action taken by the Prophet (pbuh) here, it indicates both the nature of this consultation and the purpose for which it was legislated. Consultation in Islamic law is legitimate, but it is not binding. Rather, the wise purposes which it serves are: (1) to bring out the various opinions held by the Muslims, (2) to seek out benefits which some may be aware of while others are not, and (3) to bring reassurance to the Muslims' minds and hearts. If, in light of the evidence provided by Islamic law and its principles, the Muslim ruler finds himself inclined toward one of the various points of view expressed on a given issue, he may adopt it. Otherwise, he may take the course of action which he himself sees as best, provided that it does not conflict with any text in the Qur'an or the Prophetic Sunnah or a view which is held unanimously by the Muslim community.

When the Prophet (pbuh) sought out the Companions' counsel concerning the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah,

Abu Bakr said to him, "O Messenger of God, you came out with the intention of going to the Holy Ka'bah. Hence, continue to move toward it, and if anyone seeks to prevent us, we will fight against him."

In the beginning, the Prophet (pbuh) was in agreement with what Abu Bakr had said, so he proceeded toward Mecca with his Companions. However, when his she-camel kneeled and balked and he realized that she was forbidden to go to Mecca, he abandoned the point of view which he had first been urged to adopt and declared, "By the One who holds my soul in His hand, whenever they ask me for a way in which to honor God's commands, I give it to them." Then he (pbuh) turned his attention away from the task that Abu Bakr had urged him to pursue in order to work instead on finalizing the truce arrangement by agreeing to the terms which the polytheists had demanded. The Prophet (pbuh) made this decision without consulting anyone; in fact, he did so without showing the slightest concern for whether others approved or disapproved of his action.

What this means is that the process of consultation remains subordinate to the rule of revelation, which consists of the Book of God, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the unanimous consensus of the Muslim community as represented by its imams, may God be pleased with them all. It means, in addition, that consultation was established in Islam in order to provide additional insight into matters of importance, yet without being binding and without a vote being taken on the basis thereof.

Third: Seeking blessings and answers to prayer through the mediation of physical objects or substances associated with the Prophet's person (pbuh). As we saw above, 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud began looking with new eyes at the Prophet's companions, saying, "By God, hardly has this man expectorated before one of them catches the spittle in his hand and rubs his face or his skin with it. When he gives them a command, they obey it, and when he does his ablutions, they nearly kill each other to get the benefit of the water that had contact with his body. When they speak, they lower their voices in his presence, and they hold him in such reverence, they avoid looking him in the eye."

By means of this vivid, living picture of the Prophet's relationship with his Companions, 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud draws our attention to the great love which the Prophet's Companions felt toward him (pbuh). Moreover, this situation contains lessons which it behooves every Muslim to ponder. Firstly, no one truly has faith in the Messenger of God (pbuh) unless he loves him as well. This love, however, is not merely an abstract, intellectual entity. Rather, it is something that grips one's heart and affects one's conduct in the manner described by 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud.

Secondly, this incident points to the fact that seeking blessing through physical objects or substances associated with the Prophet's person (pbuh) is a practice which is not only legitimate, but even recommended to Muslims. There are well-attested, sound hadiths[237] which tell how the Companions sought blessings through the Prophet's hair, his sweat, the water with which he had performed his ablutions, his spittle, and the glass from which he (pbuh) drank.[238]

However, it makes no difference whether such blessing was sought during the Prophet's lifetime or subsequent to his death since, as al-Bukhari makes clear in his section entitled, "The Messenger of God's Graying Hair," the various objects and substances associated with him (pbuh) cannot be described as "alive" in the first place. Nevertheless, certain people who have never experienced a heart-felt love for the Prophet (pbuh) condemn the seeking of blessing or answers to prayer through the mediation of his person (pbuh) since the time of his death, arguing that when the Prophet (pbuh) died, his capacity to influence objects and events came to an end.

However, this argument is indicative of an extraordinary ignorance! Has it ever been established that the Messenger of God (pbuh) possessed a supernatural ability to influence objects during his lifetime, such

that we would need to ascertain what happened to this capacity after his death? No Muslim could ever attribute the power to exert supernatural influence over things to anyone but the single, unique One, may His majesty be exalted, and anyone who believes otherwise is denying that which is unanimously agreed upon by the entire Muslim community.

The reason for this is that the basis for seeking blessings and answers to prayer either through the Prophet's own person or through objects or substances associated with him is not that we have attributed any sort of supernatural influence to him – and God forbid that we should do so! – but, rather, the fact that he (pbuh) was the finest of all God's creatures and the manifestation of God's mercy to His servants. The seeking of blessing in this manner, then, is based upon his nearness to his Lord and God's limitless mercy toward His creation. It was with this awareness that the blind man implored him (pbuh) to restore his sight to him, in response to which God Himself enabled him to see again.[239] It was with this understanding that the Companions used to seek blessing through the objects and substances associated with the Prophet's person without finding any cause for offense. We made mention earlier of the desirability of seeking out the intercession of the righteous, the god-fearing, and members of the Prophet's household when praying for rain and other things; we noted also that this practice is approved by the majority of Islam's imams and jurisprudents, including al-Shawkani, Ibn Qudamah, al-Hanbali, al-San'ani, and others.[240]

In light of such considerations as these, the distinction made between the period during which he (pbuh) lived and the period since his death represents an unjustified confusion.

Fourth: The ruling concerning standing in the presence of someone who is seated. As we have seen, al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah, may God be pleased with him, stood at the Prophet's head with a sword in his hand, and whenever 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud tried to grasp the Prophet's beard, he would strike 'Urwah's hand with his scabbard, saying, "Get your hand away from the Messenger of God's face."

As we mentioned in our discussion of the battle against Banu Qurayéah, it is not legitimate in Islam to remain standing at the head of someone who is seated, despite the fact that this is a recognized way of expressing respect and veneration among non-Arab peoples. As the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever wishes to have others rise for him, let him take his seat in Hell-fire." Why, then, were things done differently in this situation?

The answer to this question is that this particular circumstance – that is, one in which messengers from the enemy are being sent to appear before the Muslim ruler, the Imam, or the Caliph -- represents an exception to the general rule we have stated. In a case such as this, there is nothing to prevent guards or soldiers from standing at the head of the Muslim leader as a means of displaying the power and glory of Islam, showing respect for the Imam, and protecting him from harm.[241] In most circumstances, however, such a practice is not permissible because, in addition to being unnecessary, it is inconsistent with the requirements of belief in the one God and other aspects of Islamic doctrine.

Similarly, as we saw in our discussion of the Battle of Uhud, there is a general rule in Islam according to which any gait which expresses arrogance or a show of power for power's sake is prohibited. However, it becomes permissible in a combat situation, as evidenced by the fact that when Abu Dujanah strutted about before the other Muslim fighters, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "This is a gait which is odious to God except in this situation."

Fifth: The legitimacy of concluding truces between the Muslims and their enemies. Scholars and imams have concluded based on the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah that the conclusion of this type of armistice between the Muslims and their opponents in war is permissible provided that the agreement is for a clearly specified period of time. This is the case whether or not the agreement involves compensation to be paid to

the Muslims; if the truce involves no such compensation, it is permitted because it follows the same pattern as the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah. If, on the other hand, there is compensation, it is permissible by analogy with the first situation, since if it is permissible even without compensation for the Muslims, then it makes even more sense for it to be permitted when such compensation is involved.

If, however, the peace treaty involves a stipulation that the Muslims must pay money to the enemy, this is prohibited according to the majority of Islamic scholars due to the abasement which this could cause to the Muslims before others, and because there is no text in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah which explicitly allows for it. Nevertheless, Islamic juriss agree that in a case of dire necessity - for example, in a situation where the Muslims fear being taken captive or fear for their survival as a community - then such a stipulation may be acceptable, just as it permissible for a captive to ransom himself with money.

Sixth: According to al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, and many other scholars of Islam, such a peace treaty must be for a specified period of time, and this period of time must not exceed ten years, because this is the period of time to which the Prophet (pbuh) agreed with the Qurayshites in the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah.

Seventh: The conditions set forth in peace treaties are classified as either valid or invalid. Valid conditions are those which do not violate any text in either the Qur'an or the Prophetic Sunnah, such as stipulating that the Muslims be granted payment or provisions when needed, or that the Muslims must send back any man who came to them as a Muslim. Islamic jurists have judged this latter condition to be valid; however, opposed to this view is al-Shafi'i, may God be pleased with him, who stipulates that in such a case, the Muslim must have a clan to protect him among the infidels. Al-Shafi'i bases this stipulation on the Prophet's agreement to this condition in his dealings with Quraysh.[242]

As for invalid conditions, they are those which contain elements that violate some well-established legal ruling. Examples of such conditions include the necessity of sending back Muslim women who had defected from the Qurayshites or returning the women's dowries to Quraysh, and giving Quraysh some of the Muslims' weapons or money. The basis for this conclusion with regard to the first of these conditions is the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) did not agree to send back the women who had fled from Quraysh on account of their Islamic faith, as well as the Qur'an's explicit prohibition of the same.

Someone might ask: But did the Messenger of God (pbuh) not violate a pledge which he had made to send back anyone who came to him from Mecca as a Muslim? In response, let us note that the relevant condition of the agreement did not explicitly mention women; rather, it is possible that this condition applied to none but men. Be that as it may, we have seen that the actions taken by the Prophet (pbuh) do not take on the force of legal precedents unless the Qur'an confirms them either by passing over them in silence or explicitly approving them. The Qur'an approves all the terms of this treaty except that which has to do with returning Muslim women to infidel territory – assuming, that is, that this was indeed included among the terms of the agreement.

Eighth: The ruling concerning Muslims who have the intention of completing either the major or the minor pilgrimage, but who are prevented from doing so by some unforeseen circumstance. As we have seen, after the Prophet (pbuh) concluded the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, he turned his attention to slaughtering the sacrificial animals he had brought to offer while on the minor pilgrimage, shaving his head, and releasing himself from the obligation which he had taken upon himself by means of his initial intention to complete the pilgrimage. What this tells us is that it is permissible for a would-be pilgrim who has been prevented by forces beyond his control from carrying out his intention to be released from this obligation by slaughtering a she-goat or an appropriate substitute in the place where the hindering circumstance took place, shaving his head, then uttering the intention to be released from what he had originally intended to perform, be it the major pilgrimage (hajj), or the minor pilgrimage ('umrah).

A further implication of this is that if the person being released from his former intention to perform the

pilgrimage was going to do so as a voluntary act of piety,[243] he is not required to perform a compensatory pilgrimage at a later time. However, Abu Hanifah differed with this view, holding that once one has initiated an attempt to perform the pilgrimage, be it hajj or 'umrah, he is duty bound to perform a compensatory pilgrimage if the first attempt is thwarted for any reason. Abu Hanifah based this view on the fact that, apart from those who died or were martyred in the Battle of Khaybar, all those who went out with the Prophet (pbuh) on the pilgrimage journey which resulted in the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah also took part in the compensatory pilgrimage which will be discussed below.

The Battle of Khaybar

In the year 7 A.H., toward the end of the month of al-Muharram, the Prophet (pbuh) marched toward Khaybar, a large city full of citadels and farms which was located 100 miles north of Medina. When the Prophet (pbuh) set out on this expedition he was accompanied by 1,400 fighters, some mounted and others on foot. Ibn Hisham relates the following account:

When the Prophet (pbuh) reached the outskirts of Khaybar, he told his men to stop. Then he said, "O God, Lord of the heavens and all that lies beneath them, Lord of the Earth and all that is supported thereby, Lord of the evil spirits and all whom they have led astray, Lord of the winds and all that they have blown hither and yon, we ask You for the best to be found in this village and the best of its inhabitants. We seek Your protection from any evil to be found in this place or in its people."

Then, speaking to the people, he said, "And now, move forward in the name of God."

Whenever the Messenger of God (pbuh) set out against a tribe, he would wait until morning; if he heard the call to prayer, he would refrain from invading, but if he heard none, he would attack. Hence, he (pbuh) spent the night outside the city; then, not having heard the call to prayer, he drew nearer and saw the laborers on their way to their fields carrying their spades, axes, and large baskets. When the people saw him (pbuh), they cried out, "Muhammad and his army!" Then they turned and fled.

"God is greatest," he (pbuh) said, "Khaybar shall be defeated, for when we encamp outside a people's dwellings, woe betide those who must carry them the warning."[244]

Ibn Sa'd narrates that the Messenger of God (pbuh) spoke encouraging words to his people. Then the banners were raised, thereby distinguishing one army from the other, and the battle between the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the people of Khaybar began. By the time the fighting commenced, the people of Khaybar had fortified themselves inside their strongholds, but the Muslims began penetrating one fortress after another. However, two fortresses, named al-Watih and al-Sulalim, continued to hold out against the Muslim army, which had laid siege against them for some ten days and nights.

The following account is narrated by Ahmad, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Hibban, and al-Hakim on the authority of Buraydah Ibn al-Khatib, who said:

At the battle of Khaybar, Abu Bakr took the standard; however, he returned without having been able to open up the fortress. The following morning, 'Umar took it, but returned with the same result.

After this the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Tomorrow I shall pass my standard to a man at whose hands God will bring victory. He is a man who loves God and His Messenger."

The Muslim army spent that entire night speculating over which of them would be given the standard. The next morning, they came to the Messenger of God (pbuh), every one of them hoping to be the person of whom he had spoken.

The Prophet (pbuh) then asked, "Where is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib?"

They replied, "O Messenger of God, his eyes are hurting him."

"Send for him," he (pbuh) told them.

ʿAli was then brought to the Prophet (pbuh), who spit in his eyes and uttered a prayer. As soon as he (pbuh) had done so, ʿAli's eyes were restored to normal, as if nothing had ever afflicted them. The Messenger of God (pbuh) then gave him the standard and ʿAli said, "O Messenger of God, should we battle against them until they become as we are (that is, Muslims)?"

The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "March forward at your own pace until you reach their city square. Then invite them to embrace Islam and tell them what God rightfully requires of them. Truly, for God to lead one man onto the right path through you is better than possessing the finest of all livestock."

ʿAli then went forth to battle, the fortresses were subdued at his hands, [245] and the Muslims gained possession of all the wealth in most of Khaybar's fortresses.

As for the two most impregnable fortresses, the Muslims continued to surround them until, when those inside were sure they were doomed to perish, they asked the Messenger of God (pbuh) to release them and spare their lives in return for their evacuating the land and leaving all of its wealth to him. And the Messenger of God (pbuh) agreed to their request.

Following this, they asked the Messenger of God (pbuh) to allow them to remain in Khaybar and till the land, since they were more knowledgeable of the land and had lived there for a longer period of time. In addition, they requested that half of the land's proceeds be theirs. Hence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) made peace with them based on these terms, saying to them, "However, if we should choose to expel you from the land, we reserve the right to do so."[246]

Ibn Ishaq relates that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) had been assured of his conquest of Khaybar, a woman by the name of Zaynab Bint al-Harith, the wife of Salam Ibn Mishkam, presented the Prophet (pbuh) with a roasted she-goat. Before preparing it, she had asked which part of the goat was the Messenger of God's favorite, and she was told that he preferred the leg. Hence, as she prepared the meat, she placed a large amount of poison in the legs, and poisoned the rest of the animal as well. She then came and placed it before the Messenger of God (pbuh), who took the leg and chewed a bite of it, but did not swallow it. Bishr Ibn al-Bara' Ibn Maʿrur, who was seated with the Prophet (pbuh), likewise took some of the food. However, whereas Bishr swallowed the bite he took, the Prophet (pbuh) spit his out.

Then he (pbuh) said, "This bone is telling me that it is poisoned."

He called for Zaynab, and she confessed to what she had done.

"What would make you do such a thing?" he (pbuh) asked her.

She replied, "You are aware of what you did to my people. So I said: If this man is merely a king, I will have gotten rid of him, but if he is a prophet, he will realize that the meat is poisoned."

The Prophet (pbuh) then let her go, but Bishr died of what he had eaten.[247]

We are told by al-Zuhri and by Sulayman al-Taymi in his book on the Prophet's military campaigns that Zaynab later professed Islam. However, there is disagreement as to whether or not the Prophet (pbuh) had her put to death as punishment for what she did to Bishr. Ibn Saʿd narrates an account on the basis of numerous different chains of transmission that he (pbuh) handed Zaynab over to Bishr's allies, who put her to death. However, the correct account is that narrated by Muslim, according to which the Prophet (pbuh) told her, "God would never have given you power to do such a thing."

Others then asked, "Should we not put her to death, O Messenger of God?"

"No," he (pbuh) replied.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then distributed the spoils from Khaybar among the Muslim fighters, giving

each foot soldier a single share and each horseman two shares. Al-Bukhari relates on the authority of Nafi', may God be pleased with him, that if one of the men had a horse, he was given three shares, whereas if he did not, he was given a single share. A woman by the name of Safiyah, daughter of the Jewish leader Huyayy Ibn Akhtab, was among the women of Khaybar who were taken captive. After she embraced Islam, the Prophet (pbuh) married her, granting her release from bondage as her marriage dowry.[248]

The Return of Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib from Abyssinia

While the Prophet (pbuh) was in Khaybar, Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib returned from Abyssinia. When Ja'far came to see the Messenger of God (pbuh), he was accompanied by sixteen other men and one woman, as well as another group who had been in Yemen. After receiving permission from the Muslims who were already in Khaybar, the Prophet (pbuh) gave Ja'far and those who arrived with him a share of the spoils.

Ibn Hisham tells us that when Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib arrived, the Prophet (pbuh) kissed him between the eyes and embraced him, then said, "I don't know which makes me happier – the conquest of Khaybar, or Ja'far's coming!"[249]

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) returned from Khaybar to Medina, he placed Khaybar under the command of a Helper by the name of Sawad Ibn Ghaziyah, of the tribe of Banu' Adi. Some time after this, Sawad brought the Prophet some dates of outstanding quality, and the Messenger of God (pbuh) asked, "Are all of the dates in Khaybar like these?"

"Actually, they are not, O Messenger of God," he replied. "Sometimes we barter two or three measures of other types of dates for one measure of these."

The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Don't do that. Instead, sell the dates you have for dirhems, then use the money to buy the good quality ones."[250]

Lessons and Principles

The first thing to note about this expedition is the qualitative distinction between it and all those that preceded it. All the expeditions which we have discussed thus far were defensive in nature, and the Muslims went to battle in order to defend their existence and to repel attacks by their enemies. However, this expedition, which took place immediately after the battle against Banu Qurayéah and the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, differs in an essential way from all earlier expeditions in that for the first time, the Messenger of God (pbuh) was the one to initiate hostilities by launching a surprise attack against the Jews who had settled in the Khaybar area. This fact indicates that with the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, the Islamic mission had entered a new phase.

The sole purpose of this expedition was to call the Jews to embrace Islam and to wage war against them for their unbelief, their stubborn refusal to accept the truth, and the bitterness and hostility which they harbored toward Islam and the Muslims despite the peaceful invitation which had been extended to them over a long period of time based on reasoned arguments and proofs. As a consequence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) spent the first night after his arrival in the outskirts of Khaybar in quiet observation, doing nothing to make anyone aware of his presence. Then, after waiting until daybreak and not hearing any call to prayer – the call to prayer being the foundational religious rite in Islam – he launched his attack.

This reason becomes even clearer in light of the question which 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, asked the Messenger of God (pbuh) when he handed him the standard: "Shall I battle against them until they become as we are (that is, Muslims)?" to which the Prophet (pbuh) replied, saying, "March forward at your own pace until you reach their city square. Then invite them to embrace Islam and tell them what

God rightfully requires of them."

Muslim scholars have derived numerous lessons and principles from the Battle of Khaybar, which we summarize as follows:

One: The permissibility of launching an unannounced attack on those who have received the call to embrace Islam and who have been given an accurate explanation of its teachings. This is the teaching of the Shafi'i school, and it is likewise adopted by the majority of Muslim jurisprudents. The basis for this teaching is the attack launched on Khaybar by the Messenger of God (pbuh). Moreover, it is a unanimously agreed upon condition for such an attack that, before it is launched, the message of Islam must have been announced to the people concerned, and that they must have understood this message fully and properly.

Two: The division of spoils on the basis mentioned above, namely, four-fifths of the spoils being distributed among the fighters, with foot soldiers receiving one share and horsemen three shares – one share being for the fighter, and two for his horse.[251] As for the remaining fifth, it is to be further divided into fifths, with each fifth going to one of the groups mentioned in the Qur'anic verse which says, "And know that whatever booty you acquire (in war), one-fifth thereof belongs to God and the Apostle, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer" (Qur'an 8: 41). The Shafi'i and Hanafi schools hold that, subsequent to his death, the Prophet's share of this fifth was to be devoted to serving Muslims' collective interests, while others have held that it was to be set aside for the Caliph, who was free to spend it as he saw fit; these two views, however, are in basic agreement with each other.

Three: The permissibility of giving a share of the spoils to noncombatants who are present at the site where the fighting took place. This practice is allowed on the condition that permission has been granted by those who have first claim to the spoils. Hence, when the Prophet (pbuh) gave a share of the spoils from the Battle of Khaybar to Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib and those had returned with him from Abyssinia and Yemen, he (pbuh) only did so after receiving permission from the Companions.

It should be noted that al-Bukhari's account contains no mention of the stipulation that permission must be granted by the Muslims who have first claim to such spoils. However, al-Bayhaqi states that before the Prophet (pbuh) set aside a share for them, he spoke to the other Muslims concerned and they agreed to this. The validity of the condition noted by al-Bayhaqi in his account is further supported by the fact that when Aban Ibn Sa'id, whom the Prophet (pbuh) had sent to Najd at the head of a raiding party, returned to Khaybar after the fighting there had ended and asked the Prophet (pbuh) to give him and his men a share of the spoils, he (pbuh) did not agree to do so. The apparent conflict between the two situations may be resolved by concluding that in the first, the Muslim community concerned had agreed to allow part of their share of the spoils to be given to others, whereas in the second, such agreement was not forthcoming.[252]

One might ask: Given the developments which have occurred in connection with modern warfare, conscripted soldiers, and the policies pertaining to their remuneration and salaries, what has become of this ruling on the division of spoils? The answer to such a question is that, as we have noted above, Malik and Abu Hanifah hold that immovable property which forms part of the spoils of war is not to be distributed among the combatants unless the Muslims' interests require such a measure to be taken. As for movable property, it is to be distributed among the fighters in the same manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) did so. This principle remains in effect even though, in applying it, consideration must be given to the changes which have occurred in means and methods of warfare, as well as to the disparities which exist in fighters' levels of experience and skill. There is nothing to prevent fighters from receiving their shares in the form of bonuses or salaries to be paid in successive installments; however, the important thing is that the state not be permitted to appropriate any part of this wealth for itself.

Four: The legitimacy of sharecropping (al-musaqah) agreements in which the owner of the land allows some other party to water and care for his fruit trees on the condition that the proceeds be shared between them. Malik, al-Shafi'i, and Ahmad, may God be pleased with them, held that this type of contract is legitimate, basing this view on the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) dealt with the people of Khaybar. The only imam in disagreement with this view is Abu Hanifah, may God be pleased with him, who held that there was no evidence in the Sunnah to support such a practice. He said, "Khaybar was conquered by force; hence its inhabitants were his slaves; whatever he (pbuh) took, belonged to him, and whatever he forewent, belonged to him as well." His view was countered by the two companions,[253] who agreed with the majority view that the practice is legitimate. However, there is also disagreement among scholars as to whether the legitimacy of such a contract applies to all types of trees, or only to date palms and grapevines, since most of the trees in Khaybar were of these two types. However, the majority of scholars hold that such an arrangement is legitimate in connection with all types of trees.

As for al-muzara'ah, a temporary share-cropping arrangement in which the owner of the land has someone else plant and cultivate his land in return for a portion of its yield, it has been prohibited by a significant number of those who approve of the type described above, or al-musaqah, including al-Shafi'i. According to most Shafi'i scholars, this practice is illegitimate due to the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) prohibited al-muzara'ah and gave instructions for land to be rented out instead. The only exception to this, say the Shafi'i jurisprudents, is for the muzara'ah contract to be subject to an agreement of the musaqah type; in other words, for there to be some uncultivated land between the trees which the two parties have agreed to cultivate as part of their musaqah agreement.

Based on a careful examination of the evidence, it appears most probable that both types of sharecropping agreements – al-musaqah and al-muzara'ah – are legitimate. It must be remembered that in the beginning, the Muslims were in a state of poverty and the Emigrants possessed no land whatsoever; hence, the Prophet (pbuh) instructed the Helpers to come to their aid. In this connection, Muslim narrates a hadith on the authority of Jabir according to which some of the Helpers owned surplus lands which they used to rent out in return for one-fourth or one-third of the land's yields. Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever has land, let him farm it or give it to his brother. If his brother declines to take it, then let him hold on to it." Later, after the Muslims' material conditions improved and there was no longer any need for such provisions, it became permissible for them to enter into sharecropping agreements and for the owners of land to dispose of their property as they saw fit. This conclusion is supported by the sharecropping and rental agreements which were concluded during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) and of the Caliphs who succeeded him.

Five: The legitimacy of kissing and embracing someone who has returned from a journey, or whom one has not seen for a long time. The basis for this ruling - concerning which we are not aware of any disagreement worthy of note - is the Prophet's having embraced Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib and kissed him between the eyes when he arrived from Abyssinia. Another relevant hadith is narrated by Abi Dawud with a sound chain of transmission, as well as by al-Tirmidhi, on the authority of A'ishah, who said, "Zayd Ibn Harithah once came to see the Messenger of God (pbuh) when he was at my house. When Zayd knocked on the door, he (pbuh) got up to receive him and, trailing his robe on the floor, hugged and kissed him."

A complication appears to arise here as a result of a hadith narrated by al-Tirmidhi on the authority of Anas, may God be pleased with him, who said,

A man once said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, when a man meets his brother or his friend, should he bow to him?"

"No," the Prophet (pbuh) replied.

"Then, should he hug and kiss him?"

"No."

"Then, should he shake his hand?"

"Yes."

The apparent conflict presented by this hadith is resolved, however, by the fact that this man's question had to do with repeated, everyday encounters between friends, that is, situations in which kissing and embracing are not desirable. As for the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) received Ja'far and Zayd, this took place at a time when someone had just returned from a journey. Hence, we are dealing here with two distinct types of situation.

Six: The prohibition against usury in the exchange of foodstuffs. In other words, it is impermissible for two people to make an exchange of a single kind of food where there is a disparity in the quality of the goods being traded. Such a practice was forbidden by the Messenger of God (pbuh) in numerous sound hadiths, including the following account related by Muslim on the authority of 'Ubadah Ibn al-Samit, who said: I once heard the Prophet (pbuh) forbidding the sale of gold for gold, silver for silver, dates for dates, wheat for wheat, barley for barley, or salt for salt, unless the exchange involves two amounts which are equal both in quantity and quality. He (pbuh) said that if anyone seeks to get more than he receives or vice-versa, he has engaged in usury." Another hadith with the same import is the one which we mentioned earlier, in which the Prophet (pbuh) forbade the exchange of good quality dates for poor quality ones. However, this is not the place for a discussion of the wisdom that underlies the view of this type of exchange as usury and, therefore, its prohibition. Hence, those who wish to learn of this matter in greater detail may consult the relevant books on Islamic jurisprudence.

This is not the proper place for a discussion of the wisdom to be found in such a prohibition and the reasons for which this type of exchange is to be viewed as usury; however, what needs to be noted here is simply that the Prophet (pbuh) directed those who wished to exchange poor quality dates for good ones, or for any foodstuff for that matter, to another means of accomplishing the same end which involves no usury, namely, to sell the bad dates for money, then purchase the good ones which they wish to obtain. Such a practice, having been sanctioned by the Prophet himself (pbuh), brings no harm to anyone; rather, it simply allows one to gain access through such a sale to something which, were it gained in some other manner, would be forbidden. The only things which are truly forbidden are those which are expressly prohibited by the Qur'an or the Sunnah.

The principle to be derived from this is that it is permissible to turn a prohibited act into a legitimate one if this is done through a legitimate means, and this is not considered to be an illegal artifice. For example, a man may marry a divorced women for the purpose of making it lawful for her to remarry her former husband if this is not stipulated in the contract. Similarly, a creditor may give the zakah due on his own wealth to a debtor who has not been able to repay him, then reclaim the same money as payment of the latter's debt.

There is no validity to Ibn al-Qayyim's objection to such practices based on the claim that actions are to be judged on the basis of the intentions behind them. Ibn al-Qayyim holds, for example, that the person who sells something with the intention of accomplishing something other than that for which selling was established, and that the person who marries with the intention of accomplishing something other than that for which marriage was instituted are implicated in illegitimate acts, since they have diverted precepts in Islamic law away from their original purposes and exploited them to achieve ends other than those for which such precepts were initially legislated. As we have stated, such claims are without foundation, because they flatly contradict the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari mentioned above. Besides this, it must be noted that principles of jurisprudence are formulated based on the texts before us, not vice-versa.

In addition, Ibn al-Qayyim contradicts himself in a most peculiar way in this connection in his book entitled, I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-Alamin, where he goes to great lengths to criticize certain actions which he describes as "illegal artifices," waxing prolix in the refutation of the views of those imams who hold them to be valid and warning them of the dire fate which awaits them at the hands of God Almighty on the Day of Judgment. Then, just a few pages later, he argues in favor of these same practices and offers examples to demonstrate that they are, in fact, legitimate legal artifices, as though he himself weren't the one who, just a few pages earlier, had gone to great lengths to refute them and warn against them.[254]

During this campaign there occurred two events, both of which have been firmly established through sound hadiths, which may be counted among the great miracles with which God supported Muhammad (pbuh). The first of these took place when he (pbuh) spit into 'Ali's ailing eye, causing it to be restored so quickly and so completely, it was as if there had never been any pain. As for the second, it was God's disclosure to the Prophet (pbuh) that the she-goat of which he was about to partake had been poisoned. For some reason to be found in God's providence, Bishr Ibn al-Bara' swallowed his bite before the Messenger of God (pbuh) declared the meat to be poisoned. However, perhaps this was to manifest even more clearly the unique protection which God had bestowed upon His Prophet (pbuh) from people's machinations and attempts to bring him harm – the protection which is referred to the promise, "And God will protect you from mankind.Verily, God does not guide the people who disbelieve" (Qur'an 5: 67).

As we have mentioned, narrators have differed as to whether the Jewish woman who poisoned the she-goat became a Muslim or not. However, it is most probable – in accordance with the views put forward by al-Zuhri and others – that she did embrace Islam, and that it was for this reason that, as we are told by Muslim, the Prophet (pbuh) did not have her put to death. It cannot be said that the punishment for her crime would have been death based on the Islamic law of retribution, since the agreed-upon principle in such cases is that "Islam cancels out all that came before it." Hence, an act of murder such as this would call for the death penalty only if it was committed by the person after his becoming a Muslim; if, however, it was committed prior to this, it was considered part of the warfare which is bound to take place between the infidels and the Islamic faith – a state of war which comes to an end the minute an infidel enters Islam.

As we saw in the account of the Battle of Khaybar, the Jews of Khaybar were allowed to remain in their homes and till their land, keeping one-half of its produce. This situation continued until the caliphate of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him. After people of Khaybar killed one of the Helpers and attacked 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, pulling his hands out of their sockets, 'Umar addressed the Muslims, saying, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) declared to the Jews that, although he was allowing them to remain in their land, we possessed the right to expel them should we choose to do so. Now, as you are aware, they have murdered one of the Helpers and assaulted 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, wrenching his hands out of their sockets. They are our only remaining enemy; hence, if anyone has possessions in Khaybar, let him claim them now, for I am about to expel the Jews."

And thus it was that the Jews were driven out of the Arabian Peninsula. Had it not been for the outrages they had committed, their belligerence and their arrogant refusal to receive the truth, this would not have happened. However, all land belongs to God, who bequeaths it to whom He wills, with the ultimate reward being granted to those who fear Him.

The Sending of Detachments to the Tribes, and Letters to Kings

In the year 7 A.H., the Messenger of God (pbuh) began sending out detachments to the various tribes scattered throughout the Arabian Peninsula, their mission being to invite these tribes to embrace Islam. Then, if they refused to do so, the Muslims would initiate hostilities against them. Ten different detachments were sent out in this manner, each of them under the command of one of the Companions. During this same period of time, the Prophet (pbuh) began dispatching letters to the world's various monarchs and rulers, calling upon them to embrace Islam and denouncing the false religions which these leaders had been following.

Ibn Sa'd writes in his Tabaqat that:

When he (pbuh) returned from al-Hudaybiyah in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, 6 A.H., he dispatched messengers to various monarchs, inviting them to embrace Islam. With each messenger he (pbuh) would send a letter to the ruler concerned.

Then someone said, "O Messenger of God, kings will only read letters which bear some sort of official stamp."

Hence, he (pbuh) had a stamp made of silver on which three lines were inscribed, "Muhammad, the Messenger of God," and from then on, he stamped all of his letters with it.

One day in Muharram, 7 A.H., six different men were sent out, each of them able to speak the language of the people to whom he was being sent.

The first messenger dispatched by the Messenger of God (pbuh) was 'Amr Ibn Umayyah al-Dimri, who was sent to the Christian Emperor of Abyssinia. After receiving the messenger, the Emperor took the letter and placed it on his eyes; then he got out of bed and sat humbly on the floor. Then he uttered the testimony of faith and said, "If I were able to come see him (pbuh), I would do so."[255]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) sent Dihyah Ibn Khalifah al-Kalbi to Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium. Dihyah first delivered the letter to the ruler of Busra, who passed it on to Heraclius. The letter read as follows:

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace:

From Muhammad, the Messenger of God, to Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium.

May peace be upon all those who follow true guidance.

I invite you to embrace the message of Islam. Surrender yourselves to obeying and worshipping the one God, and you will enjoy safety and well-being. Surrender yourselves to God, and He will grant you a double reward. However, if you turn away, you will bear the iniquity of all those who submit to your authority. "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God. But if they turn away, then say: 'Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him.'"[256]

Ibn Sa'd narrates the following account in his Al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá:

After reading the message from the Messenger of God (pbuh), Heraclius spoke to a gathering of governors and members of his retinue, saying, "O people of Byzantium! Do you enjoy salvation and right guidance? And do you believe that your rule will remain firm if you continue to follow the words spoken by Jesus, son of Mary?"

"What do you mean, O King?" they replied.

"That is, are you willing to follow this Arab prophet?"

In response, the people fell into a state of confusion, fighting each other and raising the cross. When Heraclius saw what was happening, he despaired of their embracing Islam and feared both for himself and his rule. Hence, he silenced them, saying, "I only said what I did in order to test you and to see how steadfast you are in your religion. And what I have seen pleases me well."

Then they prostrated themselves before him.

During the same period, the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent 'Abdullah Ibn Hudhafah al-Sahmi to deliver a letter to Khosrau (King of Persia) inviting him to enter Islam. 'Abdullah said, "I delivered the letter, and it was read to him. However, he took it and tore it into pieces."

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) learned of what Khosrau had done, he said, "May God likewise tear his kingdom to pieces."

Meanwhile, Khosrau wrote a letter to Badhan, the governor he had appointed over Yemen, saying, "Send two strong men to this man, and have them bring him to me."

Badhan then sent two men to Medina with a letter, which they delivered to the Prophet (pbuh). In response, he (pbuh) smiled and told them, "Take your leave of me today, then come back tomorrow and I will tell you what I intend to do."

The two men came back the following day and he told them, "Inform your friend that seven hours ago, on this very night, my Lord killed his lord, Khosrau (Ibn Sa'd adds here that it was Tuesday, 10 Jumadá al-ülá, 7 A.H.), and that God, blessed and exalted be He, has given him into the power of his son, Shirawayh."

The two men then returned to Badhan with this message, and he and his sons who were in Yemen all entered Islam.[257]

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent al-Harith Ibn 'Umayr al-Azdi to Shurahbil Ibn 'Amr al-Ghassani, the Byzantine governor of Busrá, he bound him with ropes and killed him. However, al-Harith Ibn 'Umayr was the only courier sent out by the Messenger of God (pbuh) to be killed.[258]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) sent many other couriers and letters to the Arab rulers scattered throughout the region, some of whom embraced Islam, and some of whom resisted. During this same period of time, numerous delegations were sent to the Prophet (pbuh) to declare their acceptance of Islam and enter into practical obedience to the religion of God Almighty; those who embraced Islam at this time included such major Arab figures and leaders as Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-As.

Ibn Ishaq narrates the following on the authority of 'Amr Ibn al-As who said:

After setting out to visit the Messenger of God (pbuh), I encountered Khalid Ibn al-Walid. This was before the conquest of Mecca, and Khalid Ibn al-Walid was coming away from Mecca.

I asked him, "Where are you going, Abu Sulayman?"

"Actually," he replied, "I am on my way to declare myself a Muslim. After all, how long (shall we continue as we have been)?"

"And I have come out for the same purpose," said I.

So we traveled on together. Khalid was the first to enter Islam and declare his allegiance to the Prophet (pbuh), after which I came forward and did the same.

Lessons and Principles

The detachments which the Messenger of God (pbuh) dispatched to the tribes scattered throughout the region, as well as the letters which he (pbuh) sent to various kings and potentates, are features which set this phase of his life mission apart from the phase which preceded it. The phase of the mission which began with the Emigration to Medina and which ended with the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah was, as we have noted, a defensive phase during which the call to embrace Islam was issued by solely peaceful means: In no case did the Prophet (pbuh) initiate an attack upon any group of people, and when he (pbuh) sent out envoys to invite others to embrace Islam, a negative response was not followed by military action.

However, after the conclusion of the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah between the polytheists of Quraysh and the Muslims in Medina, the Muslims gained greater confidence and peace of mind as they were no longer being harassed by attacks from the Qurayshites. As a result, it became possible for the Prophet (pbuh) to devote himself fully to establishing the rule of Islamic law – the law which he (pbuh) had been sent to deliver and enforce. This new phase was one in which open war was to be waged upon those who had received the call to embrace Islam and who had been given a clear, thorough understanding of the religion but who, nevertheless, had been prevented by pride, hatred, and malice from submitting to God and His Messenger.

This was the phase in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) fulfilled the mission which he had received from his Lord and which, by virtue of his words and deeds, became the model of rule by Islamic law which is acknowledged by Muslims as valid for all times. Not only so, but this is the phase which Western enemies of Islam try the hardest to conceal from Muslims, claiming that everything related to jihad in Islamic law is based solely upon defensive war and the repulsion of aggression by non-Muslims. However, the United Nations was established in order to defend the oppressed from aggression. Hence, there is no need to preserve the principle of defensive war, either.

It is no secret to anyone, however, that what has led such enemies of Islam to engage in this sort of trickery and misrepresentation is the fear of foreign nations, both Eastern and Western alike, that the true meaning of jihad for God's sake will be reawakened in Muslims' hearts! For if such a thing were to take place, it would lead to the inevitable collapse of Western civilization, no matter how long it happens to have been in existence. The mindset of European people has matured to the point where, as soon as they are exposed to a genuine call to Islam, they embrace it wholeheartedly; how much more of a response, then, could we expect to a call that is accompanied by self-sacrifice and jihad?

Someone might ask: But what wisdom can there be in forcing the polytheist or the atheist to enter Islam? And how can the mentality of the 21st Century comprehend such a way of going about things?! In response, we might ask: What wisdom can there be in the individual's being forced by the modern state to submit to its system and philosophy despite the genuine freedom which he possesses, and despite the fact that all citizens, both rulers and subjects alike, are in reality equal to another?

Human beings were created and placed upon Earth in order to establish the rule of God Almighty. This is the wisdom to be found in our existence, and it is the meaning behind the word khalifah as it is used in the words of God Almighty, "And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: 'Behold, I am about to establish on earth one who shall inherit it (khalifah)" (Qur'an 2: 30). The philosophy of the state founded upon the rule of God is based on the fact that we are all, without exception, servants of God who were made to worship and obey Him in reverence and humility, and upon the acknowledgment that authority

belongs to God alone, since He alone possesses a true claim over human beings and everything in existence. After all, He alone is the everlasting Source and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth.

Does it make sense for a state run by slaves who belong to God to claim the right to oblige its subjects to submit to the systems, principles and laws which it approves, while the One who created both them and the state has no right to oblige them to submit to His authority and to turn away from all false beliefs and religions? If human beings are the vicegerents of God, appointed to carry out His commands and apply His laws on Earth, then it is through human beings that God's claim to our obedience and submission will be manifested as they enter His religion and pledge themselves before God to establish the Islamic government and society under whose protection we were made to live.

Once you have realized this, it no longer matters whether there happen to be people in this century who are unwilling to acknowledge or understand it. In fact, so long as there are people who, rather than being concerned for human freedom, actually look for opportunities to destroy it, and who make it their profession to launch intellectual assaults on the Islamic world in order to dull Muslims' sensibilities and rob them of the awareness of what true Islam is, we can expect to find individuals who think in this manner.

I would genuinely like to know what value is attached to freedom by those who continue lying to themselves and to their peoples, projecting inaccurate, offensive images of Islam and portraying the Muslims as barbarians who still live in desert wastelands with their camels, sheep, and goats. For in so doing, they seek to frustrate peoples' intellectual aspirations and their desire to understand Islam lest they become aware of its truth, believe in it and bring an end to the filthiest, most miserable rule of oppression which human beings have ever known.

However, it must not be forgotten that the peaceful call to Islam which takes place everywhere and at every opportunity through wisdom, discussion, and kindly exhortation is a necessary stage which must be allowed to continue for a long period of time before any further action is taken. When Muslims have carried out this mission in the proper fashion, it will become all the more evident that Islam is, truly, the religion which conforms to human beings' deepest, most authentic nature, and that people of all nations and races will find in it what they have been longing for. When this takes place, no one but those who hold bitterness and hostility in their hearts will stubbornly refuse to surrender to its truth.

It must likewise be remembered that the obligation to enter Islam applies solely to atheists, polytheists, idol-worshippers, and the like. As for the people who follow the Jewish and Christian revelations, they are not required – as you know – to do anything but submit to the order of Islamic society. Then, given their faith in God Almighty, their contact with Muslims over time will awaken them to the necessity of correcting their doctrinal beliefs.

Let us now examine the principles and lessons contained in the story of the letters which were sent by the Prophet (pbuh) to various monarchs and other heads of state.

One: The mission with which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was sent was intended not for a particular race or tribe, but for all people. It is one of comprehensive humanitarianism untouched by racism, nationalism, or prejudice in favor of one group against another. It is for this reason that he (pbuh) took his message to all the rulers of the world at that time. It is related on the authority of Anas, may God be pleased with him, that "the Prophet (pbuh) wrote letters to Khosrau of Persia, to Caesar, to the Emperor of Abyssinia, and to every potentate on earth, calling them to surrender themselves to God Almighty."

Two: The position taken by Heraclius and his followers, who claimed to be adherents of the religion of Jesus, Son of Mary, is evidence of the extent to which some followers of earlier revelations are ruled by

arrogant pride and the obstinate refusal to turn away from falsehood. It is people such as these who have come to conceive of religion as nothing but traditions and a sense of belonging to a particular group. Rather than looking upon religion as something which is either true or false, they simply cling to it as a part of their traditions and as an outward sign of a particular group identity. When Heraclius first read the letter from the Messenger of God (pbuh), he appeared to be a prudent leader with a proper appreciation of the reality of things. However, it soon became apparent that he was merely testing out the response of his subjects so as to know what he would need to do in order to preserve his power and authority under the new circumstances.

Three: What the Prophet (pbuh) did in this situation is evidence of the legitimacy of wearing a signet ring; the Prophet's ring was made of silver. In addition, many scholars take this event to indicate the desirability of wearing a silver ring on the same finger on which the Prophet (pbuh) wore his, namely, what is commonly referred to as the "little finger."

Four: The manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) conducted himself in this situation indicates that it is incumbent upon Muslims to provide the means by which to communicate the message of Islam throughout the world. One of the most important of such means is knowledge of the languages of the nations and peoples who are being invited to Islam and to whom its principles and precepts are being explained. As we have seen, he (pbuh) sent out no fewer than six of his Companions on one day to visit various rulers, and each of the men had a thorough understanding of the language of the people to whom he had been sent.

Five: If one takes note of the timing of this step taken by the Prophet (pbuh), it becomes clear that before calling others to embrace Islam, Muslims have the responsibility to call one another to Islam, as it were, by reforming their own ways and applying the laws of Islam to their own lives and behavior. Once they have made significant progress toward this end, it is time for them to fulfill this second responsibility. The Prophet (pbuh) could have sent a number of his Companions to such leaders and monarchs long before this. However, this would have involved violating the order of priorities which we have been discussing. It must be realized in this connection that Muslims' self-reform is, itself, an important part of calling others to Islam; after all, people are searching for a model of righteous conduct and morals which they can emulate in their own lives. If Muslims today took pride in their Islam and were faithfully applying its principles and precepts, you would see its gentle spark shining throughout Europe and penetrating the furthest reaches of Africa.

Despite the fact that al-Bukhari places the account of the Prophet's sending letters to the world's potentates after the Battle of Tabuk, which took place in the year 9 A.H., it is agreed upon by most other scholars of the Prophetic biography that they were sent out in the year 7 A.H., that is, prior to the conquest of Mecca. According to Ibn Hajar, the difference between these two points of view may be reconciled by bearing in mind that the Prophet (pbuh) sent a written message to Caesar on two separate occasions, the second of which is mentioned in Imam Ahmad's Musnad. He (pbuh) wrote one letter to the Emperor of Abyssinia who entered Islam, and whom he (pbuh) prayed over when he died; he (pbuh) followed this with another letter to his successor, who remained an unbeliever.

The Compensatory Performance of the Minor Pilgrimage (Umrah)

In 7 A.H., during the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah – the same month in which, one year earlier, the polytheists had prevented his entry into Mecca -- the Prophet (pbuh) set out for Mecca once again with the intention of undertaking a compensatory performance of the minor pilgrimage. Ibn Sa'd tells in his Al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá that, "the two thousand people who came out to perform the minor pilgrimage with him (pbuh) included those who had participated in the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah as well as others who had joined them later. Not a single signatory to the truce stayed back unless he had died or been martyred at Khaybar."[259]

Ibn Ishaq tells us that the Qurayshites had heard reports to the effect that Muhammad and his Companions were in very difficult straits. Hence, curious to know whether what they had heard was true, they gathered at the tribal leaders' official meeting place in order to get a good look at the Prophet (pbuh) and those with him.

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) entered the mosque, he wrapped his rida around himself with the center part tucked under his right armpit and the ends draped over his left shoulder. Then he (pbuh) said, "May God's mercy rest today upon whoever shows them (the polytheists) his strength."

Then, beginning at one corner of the Ka'bah, he and his Companions set out to circumambulate it at a rapid pace. Continuing to walk at the same brisk clip, he (pbuh) completed three circuits, after which he completed the remaining four circuits at a regular pace.

Ibn 'Abbas used to say, "There are those who say that this manner of circumambulating the Ka'bah is not a model for all to follow, since they hold that the Messenger of God (pbuh) only did it in this manner in response to what he (pbuh) knew the Qurayshites had been saying about him. However, when he performed his farewell pilgrimage, he (pbuh) followed the same procedure, at which point it did become part of the Prophetic Sunnah.[260]

During his time in Mecca, the Prophet (pbuh) married Maymunah Bint al-Harith. Some hold that he did so while still in a state of ritual consecration, whereas others maintain that it only took place after he had completed the minor pilgrimage. As for the person who gave him (pbuh) Maymunah's hand in marriage, it was al-'Abbas Ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the husband of Maymunah's sister, Umm al-Fadl.[261]

When the Prophet (pbuh) had been in Mecca for three days – the maximum period of time which the Qurayshites had agreed to let him stay – they came to 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, and said, "Tell your friend to depart from our midst; his time is up." So he (pbuh) did.[262] While on his way from Mecca to Medina, he (pbuh) built a dwelling for Maymunah in a place called Sarif, near al-Tan'im; then, in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, he (pbuh) departed for Mecca.

Lessons and Principles

The successful performance of this minor pilgrimage is viewed as a divine confirmation of the promise which the Prophet (pbuh) had given his Companions the year before, that they would enter Mecca and

circumambulate the Ka'bah. You will recall that during the conclusion of the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, 'Umar asked the Prophet (pbuh), "Have you not told us that we will come to the Ka'bah and circumambulate it?"

"Yes, I have," he (pbuh) replied. "But did I tell you that you would go there this year?"

"No," said 'Umar.

"So then," the Messenger of God (pbuh) reassured him, "you will indeed circumambulate the Ka'bah."

This, then, was the confirmation of the promise which the Messenger of God (pbuh) had voiced to 'Umar. It is this same promise of which God speaks to His servants in the words, "Indeed, God shall fulfill the true vision which He showed to His Messenger in very truth. Certainly, you shall enter the Inviolable House of Worship, if God so wills, secure, (some) having your heads shaved, and (some) having your head hair cut short, having no fear. He knew what you did not know, and He granted besides that a victory soon to come" (Qur'an 48: 27).

This performance of the minor pilgrimage by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his Companions served to pave the way for the marvelous conquest of Mecca which was to follow it. The sight of this massive number of Helpers and Emigrants flanking the Messenger of God (pbuh) as they circumambulated the Ka'bah and completed the other pilgrimage rites with such vigor and enthusiasm had a profound effect upon those who saw them. They were awed by the spectacle, which was the very opposite of what they had expected to see. Knowing of Medina's poor climate and the fever which was likely to have afflicted those who emigrated there, they expected to see men suffering from lassitude and weakness. Muslim narrates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that when the polytheists saw the Muslims running around the Ka'bah and back and forth between the pillars at Safa and Marwah, they said to each other, "Are these the people that you claimed had been enervated by fever?! Why, they're more robust than so-and-so and so-and-so."[263] It should thus come as no surprise that, given the manner in which it took place, this pilgrimage left such an indelible impression on those who witnessed it that it helped prepare the way for the peaceful conquest of Mecca, as we shall see below.

Besides the points we have already noted, this compensatory pilgrimage offers the following lessons:

First: During the circumambulation of the Ka'bah, it is desirable for the male pilgrim to tuck the center part of his garment beneath his right arm and drape the ends over his left shoulder,[264] then circumambulate the Ka'bah at a quick pace for the first three circuits in emulation of the Messenger of God (pbuh).[265] This gait is desirable during a circumambulation which is to be followed by sa'i, that is, hastening seven times back and forth between Safa and Marwah, since this represents the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) completed the pilgrimage rites. However, these same practices are not considered desirable for female pilgrims.

Second: Based on the account of the Prophet's marriage to Maymunah Bint al-Harith while still in a state of ritual consecration for the minor pilgrimage, some Muslim jurisprudents hold that it is permissible to conclude a marriage contract while one is in such a state. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslim scholars disallow the conclusion of a marriage contract while one is in a state of ritual consecration, whether this is done on one's own behalf or someone else's.[266] There is a Prophetic Tradition according to which, "One who is in a state of ritual consecration may neither marry nor be given in marriage."[267] The Hanifite school, however, holds that the hadith quoted above refers to the consummation of a marriage, and that if the action being referred to includes only the conclusion of the nuptial contract without its consummation, it is allowed.

During his lifetime, the Prophet (pbuh) performed the 'umrah, or minor pilgrimage, four times, and the

major pilgrimage, or hajj, only once. Muslim narrates on the authority of Anas, may God be pleased with him, that of the four times when the Messenger of God (pbuh) performed the minor pilgrimage, three of these were performed during the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah (one from al-Hudaybiyah, another the following year, one from al-Ji'ranah, where he divided up the spoils from the Battle of Hunayn, and one which was included in his performance of the major pilgrimage).[268]

The Battle of Mu'tah

This battle took place in the month of Jumadá I in the year 8 A.H. Mu'tah, a village located near the Syrian border, is known today as al-Karak.

As for the cause which led to this battle, it was the murder of al-Harith Ibn 'Umayr al-Azdi, the courier sent by the Messenger of God to the ruler of Busra, and the only courier of his to be murdered. When the Muslims received news of al-Harith's death, a summons was issued to go to war, and before long 3,000 fighters had gathered and were prepared to set out for Mu'tah.

The Prophet (pbuh) did not accompany the men who went out, which indicates that this was not so much a military campaign as it was a detachment being sent out on his behalf. Nevertheless, most scholars of the Prophetic biography refer to it as a military expedition due to the large number of Muslims who went out, and because of its great significance. Before the men set out, the Messenger of God (pbuh) told them, "Your leader will be Zayd Ibn Harithah. If Zayd is killed, he will be replaced by Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib. If Ja'far is killed, 'Abdullah Ibn Rawahah will replace him. If 'Abdullah is killed as well, let the Muslims choose a commander from amongst themselves."[269] The Messenger of God (pbuh) instructed them to call others to embrace Islam, saying that if they met with a positive response, they were to consider their mission accomplished; if, however, the response was negative, they were to rely upon assistance from God and launch an armed assault.

Ibn Ishaq tells us that the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his Companions bade farewell to the Muslim emissaries and their commanders as they set out from Medina. As they were parting, 'Abdullah Ibn Rawahah began to weep.

"What has caused you to weep?" they asked him.

He answered, "I have no love for this world, and even my ardent longing for all of you is not the cause. Rather, I heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) reciting a verse from the Qur'an which makes mention of the Hell-fire: 'There is not one of you but will pass over it (Hell): this is, with your Lord, a decree that must be accomplished' (Qur'an 19: 71). So I said to myself: Once I have come near it, how will I draw away again?"

As the Muslims marched away, those remaining called out to them, saying, "May God go with you, defend you, and bring you back to us safely!"

'Abdullah Ibn Rawahah then recited the following lines:

"As for me, I ask the Merciful One for forgiveness,

and a blow so forceful it will send me reeling,

Or a mortal thrust from the hands of one impassioned for battle

With a lance that passes through entrails and liver,

So that when people pass by my grave they will say:

'His was the guidance which God grants to those who struggle in His cause.'"

When the Muslims had gone some distance from Medina, their enemies learned of their approach and gathered their forces to meet them. Heraclius amassed more than 100,000 fighters from Byzantium, and Shurahbil Ibn ‘Amr called out 100,000 additional soldiers from the tribes of Lakhm, Judham, al-Qayn, and Bahra’.

When the Muslims heard of the forces that had been rallied against them, they stayed in Ma‘an for two nights while they thought about what to do. Some of them said, “Let us send word to the Messenger of God (pbuh) concerning our enemies’ numbers.”

However, ‘Abdullah Ibn Rawahah encouraged them saying, “O people! The thing which you loathe is the very thing you came in search of -- martyrdom! We do not wage war based on numbers or human strength, but rather, on the basis of the religion with which God has honored us. So march forth, for what awaits us is one of two blessings: either victory, or martyrdom.”

When the Muslims joined their enemies in battle near al-Karak (Mu’tah), it was clear that they were no match for their opponents’ superior numbers, weapons, and equipment. Nevertheless, Zayd Ibn Harithah took up the standard and fought together with the rest of the Muslims until he was killed by a spear thrust. The standard was then taken up by Ja‘far Ibn Abi Talib, who fought valiantly as well. Finally, pressed in on all sides by other fighters, both his own men and the enemy, he got off his horse and killed it with his sword. Then he entered the fray anew, chanting the following lines:

“How I long to approach the garden of Paradise,

its fragrance sweet and its libation cool!

As for the Byzantines, their unbelieving progeny stand aloof from the divine mercy, their chastisement draws near,

And should I meet them, I have no choice but to strike with the sword.”

Ja‘far, may God be pleased with him, continued to fight until a Byzantine soldier dealt him a blow that severed him in half. When his body was taken away, it was found to bear no fewer than fifty stab wounds, not one of which was in his back.[270]

The standard was then taken up by ‘Abdullah Ibn Rawahah, who entered the fray with the words:

“I swear to you, O my soul, you will go down to the battlefield,

You will go down, else I force you to do so!

When the people lift their voices in mourning,

Why is it that I see you despising Paradise?

For so long you were tranquil and confident,

Though you are nothing but a drop of sperm in a vessel destined to pass away!”

‘Abdullah Ibn Rawahah continued fighting until he was killed, may God be pleased with him. Thereupon, the Muslims agreed to appoint Khalid Ibn al-Walid as their commander. After taking up the standard, Khalid fought the polytheists until they were defeated, then led his army back to Medina.

Al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Anas, may God be pleased with him, that the Prophet (pbuh) announced the deaths of Zayd, Ja‘far, and Ibn Rawahah to the Muslims in Medina before the news had reached them there. He (pbuh) said, “The standard was borne by Zayd, and he was killed. Then it was passed to Ja‘far, and he was killed. Then it was passed to Ibn Rawahah, and he was killed as well.”

Then, with tears in his eyes, he added, “Then the standard was lifted up by one who is a sword in the hand of God, and he fought until God gave the Muslims victory at his hands.”

Contrary to the claim made by some scholars of the Prophetic biography that the Muslims were defeated in this battle, after which they scattered and returned to Medina, this hadith indicates that God did grant victory to the Muslims in the end. Perhaps what is meant by those who say the Muslims were defeated is that they did not pursue the Byzantines after defeating them but that instead, fearing for their well-being, they contented themselves with the fact that the Byzantines had abandoned their posts and turned back. This was undoubtedly a wise course of action on the part of Khalid Ibn al-Walid, may God be pleased with him.

Ibn Hajar tells us:

We are told in Musá Ibn 'Uqbah's Maghazi – the most accurate of all the accounts of the Prophet's military expeditions – that "after 'Abdullah Ibn Rawahah took up the standard and was killed, the Muslims agreed amongst themselves to make Khalid Ibn al-Walid their new commander, and it was at Khalid's hands that God gave the Muslims victory."

As for al-'Imad Ibn Kathir, he says, "One can reconcile the two differing views (on whether the Muslims were defeated at this battle or not) by noting that after taking command, Khalid spent the night where they were; the next morning, he rearranged the army's ranks, reversing the positions of the right and left flanks in order to give the enemy the false impression that the Muslim army had received reinforcements. Having done this, he attacked the enemy, then turned back without pursuing the Byzantines. This was due to the fact that in his estimation, bringing the Muslims back safely to Medina was the greatest war prize they could hope to win."[271]

When Khalid and his army approached Medina, they were received by the Messenger of God (pbuh), who was flanked by a number of young boys who came running out to meet them.

The Prophet (pbuh) told them, "Take the little boys and carry them along with you, and give me Ja'far's son!"

So they brought 'Abdullah (Ibn Ja'far), and he (pbuh) took him in his arms. Then the people began shouting at the army, saying, "Derelicts! So you fled for the sake of God's cause?!"

However, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "No, they are not derelicts. Rather, they are those who will rally and charge again, God willing."

Lessons and Principles

The most amazing thing about this expedition is the huge difference between the number of Muslim fighters and the number of men arrayed against them on the side of Byzantium and the Arab polytheists. According to Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd and most scholars of the Prophetic biography, the polytheists and the Byzantines who were fighting alongside them numbered approximately 200,000,[272] whereas the number of Muslims came to no more than 3,000. What this means is that the Byzantines and Arab polytheists outnumbered the Muslims more than 50 times!

This disparity was bound to have made the Muslim army look like a meager rivulet of water beside a vast, raging sea. Add to this the equipment, arms, and ammunition with which the enemy armies had prepared themselves, not to mention the pompous, luxurious trappings which they had brought along, while the Muslims, by contrast, were suffering from poverty and need!

What makes this encounter still more remarkable is that even after they had become aware of the odds against them, and despite the fact that they were a mere detachment unaccompanied by the Messenger of God (pbuh), the Muslims continued marching forward rather than retreating, placing no store by the hordes arrayed before them even though, to all appearances, if these hordes had gathered around the

Muslims and hemmed them in from all sides, the Muslims would have been little more than a tiny speck in the center of a huge black expanse! As the Muslims valiantly endured the battle against this raging sea of fighting men, and as they saw their first commander fall, followed by their second, then their third, they stormed the gates of martyrdom with joyful exhilaration and reckless abandon until, without apparent cause, the hearts of many of the polytheists were gripped with terror and, leaving their positions unprotected, they began to flee, causing untold numbers of them to lose their lives.

However, our astonishment vanishes when we remember the power of faith in God, reliance upon Him, and complete trust in His promises. In fact, it would have been even more astonishing if these soldiers – assuming them to have been true Muslims – had placed importance on numbers, war materiel, and the like after they had received a promise from God that they would be given either succor and victory in this world, or everlasting felicity in the next! After all, as ʻAbdullah Ibn Rawahah stated, Muslims do not wage war based on human strength or superior numbers, but rather, based on the religion with which God has honored them.

This expedition offers a number of significant lessons, which we summarize as follows:

One: We learn from the way in which the Prophet (pbuh) appointed Zayd, then Jaʻfar, then ʻAbdullah Ibn Rawahah to take over command of the Muslim army that the Caliph, or the person acting as the Muslims' leader, is permitted to appoint someone as commander based on a certain condition, then to appoint several different commanders to follow him in succession. Specifically, scholars state that, "If the Caliph issues such a series of appointments, all of the commanders concerned receive de jure authority immediately and simultaneously; however, this authority only becomes de facto in an orderly temporal sequence."[273]

Two: This same incident serves as evidence that Muslims are permitted to exercise independent judgment in choosing a commander if the person who was acting in this capacity is absent, or if the Caliph assigns them the task of choosing whomever they see fit. Al-Tahawi states, "This is a principle on the basis of which, if the Imam is absent for some reason, the Muslims have a responsibility to appoint someone to fulfill his duties until he returns." Not only so, but the legitimacy of Muslims' choosing a leader based on their own independent judgment and reasoning was recognized during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh).

Three: When the Prophet (pbuh) tearfully announced the deaths of his three companions Zayd, Jaʻfar, and Ibn Rawahah, he was separated from them by an immense distance. What this tells us is that God Almighty had collapsed the distance, as it were, between the Prophet (pbuh) and the events taking place on the battlefield along the borders of Syria such that he (pbuh) could see what was happening to the Muslims as they fought. Hence, this is one of the miracles with which God honored His beloved Messenger (pbuh).

This same event is evidence of the tremendous compassion which he (pbuh) felt toward his Companions. It was no small thing for the Messenger of God (pbuh) to weep as he stood among his Companions in Medina and spoke about these martyrs. However, the Prophet's tears over these Companions of his are not inconsistent with his being content with the decrees of God Almighty; for as the Prophet himself (pbuh) said, the eye is bound to shed tears and the heart is bound to grieve, since these things are merely expressions of a natural, inborn sensitivity and tenderness which God has placed within human beings.

Four: The account of the Prophet's announcing the deaths of these three Companions attributes special merit to Khalid Ibn al-Walid, may God be pleased with him. For as we saw above, his (pbuh) final words in this connection were, "Then the standard was lifted up by one who is a sword in the hand of God, and he fought until God gave the Muslims victory at his hands." This was the first battle witnessed by Khalid, may God be pleased with him, within the Muslims' ranks, since when this battle occurred, Khalid had only been a Muslim for a short time. This being the case, we know that it was the Messenger of God (pbuh) himself who first referred to Khalid Ibn al-Walid, may God be pleased with him, as "God's sword."

Khalid fought with the greatest of courage in this battle; al-Bukhari narrates that he said, "At the Battle of Mu'tah, nine different swords broke in my hand, till all I had left was a broad Yemeni sword." Commenting on this hadith, Ibn Hajar states, "This indicates that the Muslims slew a large number of polytheists (at Mu'tah)."

One might wonder why it was that, when the Muslims returned to Medina following this battle, the people said, "Derelicts! So you fled for the sake of God's cause?!" The reason for their saying this is that, contrary to their custom in previous battles, the Muslims did not pursue the Byzantines and their allies after defeating them. Rather, contenting himself with what they had accomplished, Khalid led the army back to Medina. However, as we have seen, this was a prudent decision on Khalid's part because in this manner, he protected his men from further loss of life and helped to preserve the sense of awe which the Muslim army had inspired in the hearts of the Byzantines. Realizing this fact, the Prophet (pbuh) replied to the people's complaint with the words, "No, they are not derelicts. Rather, they are those who will rally and charge again, God willing."

The Conquest of Mecca

What led to this event, which took place in the month of Ramadan, 8 A.H., is that members of the tribe of Banu Bakr had spoken to notables of the tribe of Quraysh, asking them to help them wage war on Banu Khuza'ah by supplying them with men and arms. (By this time, Khuza'ah had entered into an alliance with the Muslims.) In response, a group of Qurayshite men which included Safwan Ibn Umayyah, Huwaytib Ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza and Mikraz Ibn Hafs, went out in disguise and met men of Banu Bakr in a place called al-Watir. From there, they attacked Khuza'ah by night when they thought themselves safe and secure, killing twenty of their men. As soon as the attack had occurred, 'Amr Ibn Salim al-Khuza'i departed with forty other men and came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) to tell him what had befallen them.

Rising in haste, he (pbuh) said, "May I myself be denied victory if I should fail to help Banu Ka'b just as I would help myself! This cloud will pour forth abundant rain when Banu Ka'b's victory is won."[274]

Not long after this, regretting what they had done, the Qurayshites sent Abu Sufyan Ibn Harb to the Messenger of God (pbuh) in order to renew and extend the armistice between Quraysh and the Muslims. However, when Abu Sufyan spoke to the Prophet (pbuh), he received no reply. So he went to Abu Bakr and asked him to speak to the Messenger of God (pbuh) on his behalf, but Abu Bakr refused. Then he went to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab with the same request. 'Umar said to him, "Am I your intercessor with the Messenger of God (pbuh)? I swear to God, even if all I had was a tiny ant, I'd use it to make war on you!"

With that, Abu Sufyan made his way back to Mecca with nothing to show for his efforts.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then made ready for battle, yet without revealing the matter to anyone, and he prayed to God, saying, "O God, blind the eyes of the Qurayshites, and let them not see me until it is too late for them to prepare themselves."[275]

When the Prophet (pbuh) was prepared to set out, a man by the name of Hatib Ibn Abi Balta'ah wrote a letter to the Qurayshites, warning them to expect an attack by the Muslims. 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, relates the following:

The Messenger of God (pbuh) sent me out with al-Zubayr and al-Miqdad, saying, "Keep going until you come to the Khakh Garden, and there you will find a woman seated in a sedan chair who has a letter. Get the letter and bring it to me."

So we set off at a full gallop and kept going until we came to the garden he (pbuh) had told us about. Sure enough, the woman in the sedan chair was there, so we said to her, "Show us the letter."

"I have no letter," she replied.

"Show us the letter, or we will relieve you of your clothing."

So she took it out from beneath her long tresses and gave it to us, and we took it to the Messenger of God (pbuh). This is what the letter said: "From Hatib Ibn Abi Balta'ah, to the polytheists in Mecca, informing them of certain matters pertaining to the Messenger of God (pbuh)... "

The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "What is this, Hatib?"

"O Messenger of God," he said, "Do not draw hasty conclusions about me! I was once a man who was bound by alliances to the Qurayshites, although I am not a Qurayshite myself. As for the Emigrants who are with you, they have relatives to protect their families and their wealth. So, since I do not enjoy this sort of security and protection, I was hoping to find people among them who would protect my kin. I did not do what I did in renunciation of my faith or because I wished to deny the truth after having embraced Islam."

The Messenger of God said (to the others with them), "He is telling you the truth."

However, 'Umar said, "O Messenger of God, let me cut off this hypocrite's head!"

The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "This man fought with us at Badr, and who knows? God may bestow special mercy upon those who fought at Badr, saying to them, in effect: 'Do whatever you wish, for I have forgiven you.'"

After the Prophet (pbuh) uttered these words, the following verses of the Qur'an were revealed: "O you who believe! Do not take My enemies, who are your enemies as well, for your friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in whatever truth has come onto you, and have driven the Apostle and yourselves away, (only) because you believe in God, your Lord! If you have gone forth (from your homes) to strive in My cause, and to seek my good pleasure, (do not take them for your friends). You show friendship to them in secret, while I am fully aware of all that you conceal and reveal. And whosoever of you does that, he has indeed gone astray from the right path" (Qur'an 60: 1).[276]

After appointing Kulthum Ibn Husayn to govern Medina in his absence, the Messenger of God (pbuh) set out following the mid-afternoon prayer on Wednesday, 10 Ramadan. He sent word to Aslam, Ghifar, Muzaynah, Juhaynah, and others concerning what he (pbuh) was about to do and, once they had all gathered at Al-èahran – a place located between Mecca and Medina -- the number of Muslims came to 10,000. News of this development had not yet reached the Qurayshites; however, they were expecting something to happen given Abu Sufyan's failure to accomplish what he had hoped on his last journey to Medina. Consequently, they sent out Abu Sufyan, Hakim Ibn Hizam, and Budayl Ibn Warqa' to gather news about the Messenger of God (pbuh). When they approached Marr al-èahran and saw numerous great fires ablaze there, they wondered amongst themselves what these fires meant. But before they could come any closer, they were spotted by the Messenger of God's guards, who brought them before the Prophet (pbuh), and Abu Sufyan embraced Islam.[277]

Ibn Ishaq narrates the following account of Abu Sufyan's conversion on the authority of al-'Abbas, who said,

In the morning, I took Abu Sufyan to the Messenger of God (pbuh). When the Messenger of God (pbuh) saw him, he said, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! Has the time not come for you to know that there is no god but God?"

"Ah, how clement, gracious and devoted to your kin you are! I thought that if there were another god besides God, he would have been sufficient for me."

"Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! Has the time not come for you to know that I am the Messenger of God?"

"Ah, how clement, gracious, and devoted to your kin you are! But as for the confession you have asked me to make, something in my soul still holds back from it."

Then I (al-'Abbas) said, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! Surrender yourself to God, and bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, before you lose your head!"

So he uttered the confession of the truth, and entered Islam.

Then I said, "O Messenger of God, Abu Sufyan is a man who loves to have something to take pride in, so grant him some special honor."

"That is true," he (pbuh) replied, "so whoever enters Abu Sufyan's home shall be safe, whoever goes into his own home and closes the door shall be safe, and whoever enters the mosque shall be safe."

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) wanted the Muslim army to march toward Mecca, he said to me, "Keep Abu Sufyan at the mouth of the ravine so that when God's soldiers pass by, he can see them."

So I went out and kept him with me at the place where the Messenger of God (pbuh) had instructed me. As we waited there the various tribes passed by with their standards, and whenever a tribe passed by he would say, "Who is this, 'Abbas?"

I would answer him, saying, "Sulaym," for example.

And he would say, "What do I care about Sulaym?"

We went on this way until at last, the Messenger of God (pbuh) passed by with a battalion made up of the Emigrants and the Helpers. They were so heavily armed, all he could see was a mass of iron.

"My goodness, 'Abbas! Who is that?"

"That is the Messenger of God (pbuh) with the Emigrants and the Helpers!" I told him.

"No one would stand a chance against them," he said. "Abu al-Fadl, your nephew's kingdom has grown mighty, indeed!"

"It is not a kingdom, Abu Sufyan," I told him. "It is prophethood!"

"So be it, then," he replied.[278]

Then al-'Abbas said to him, "Rescue your people!"

So Abu Sufyan hastened to enter Mecca before the arrival of the Messenger of God (pbuh). Shouting at the top of his lungs, he cried, "O people of Quraysh! Muhammad is coming to you with something which you possess no power to resist! But whoever enters the home of Abu Sufyan will be safe from harm."

When Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind Bint 'Utbah, heard what he had said, she grabbed him by the moustache and shouted, "Kill this bloated butterball! A fine bunch of guards our people have!"

"Woe to you!" he replied, "Do not allow yourselves to be tempted to do such a thing! What has come to you is something which you are powerless to resist. But whoever enters Abu Sufyan's house will be safe from harm."

"Damn you!" the others retorted, "What good will your house do us?"

Abu Sufyan continued, "Safe also will be whoever enters his own home and closes the door, and whoever goes into the mosque."

Thereupon, the people scattered and rushed either to their homes or to the mosque.[279]

Meanwhile, a report reached the Messenger of God (pbuh) to the effect that while Abu Sufyan was standing at the mouth of the ravine, Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah told him, "Today will be a day of bloodshed. Today the Ka'bah will be desecrated!"

Displeased with what Sa'd had said, the Prophet (pbuh) declared, "Rather, today will be a day of mercy,

and today God will bring honor to the Ka'bah."

Then he (pbuh) instructed the commanders of his armies not to attack anyone unless they were attacked first.[280] However, he (pbuh) made an exception for six men and four women, all of whom were to be killed wherever they were found. The six men were: 'Ikrimah Ibn Abi Jahl, Habbar Ibn al-Aswad, 'Abdullah Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abi Sarh, Miqyas Ibn Sababah al-Laythi, al-Huwayrith Ibn Nuqayd, and 'Abdullah Ibn Hilal. As for the women, they were Hind Bint 'Utbah, Sarah, the servant of 'Amr Ibn Hashim, and two slave girls by the names of Fartaná and Qarinah, who had satirized the Prophet (pbuh) in song.[281]

Entering the city from its most elevated point, known as Kada',[282] the Prophet (pbuh) ordered Khalid Ibn al-Walid to lead his men in via Kudayy, a site in lower Mecca. So the Muslims entered from the points at which they had been instructed to, and none of them encountered any resistance except for Khalid Ibn al-Walid, who was confronted by a band of polytheists which included 'Ikrimah Ibn Abu Jahl and Safwan Ibn Umayyah. During the resulting battle, Khalid killed twenty-four Qurayshites and four men of the tribe of Hudhayl. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) saw the glint of swords in the distance, he disapproved of what was happening. However, he was told, "Khalid was attacked, and he is fighting back."

"God's decree is best," he (pbuh) replied.[283]

Ibn Ishaq narrates on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Bakr, and al-Hakim on the authority of Anas, that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) reached Dhu Tuwá, he brought his she-camel to a halt, his head wrapped in a turban made from a piece of striped, embroidered Yemeni cloth. Humbled by the sight of the honor God had bestowed upon him through this victory, he (pbuh) bowed his head so low that his beard nearly touched the saddle.

Al-Bukhari relates the following on the authority of Mu'awiyah Ibn Qurrah, who said, "I heard 'Abdullah Ibn Mughaffal saying that on the day Mecca was conquered, he saw the Messenger of God mounted on his she-camel and chanting Chapter 48 of the Qur'an, entitled, 'Victory' in a vibrant, quavering voice, and which is referred to by 'Abdullah Ibn al-Mughaffal as al-tarji'. This is agreed upon by the majority. 'Abdullah then added, saying, 'If people were not gathered around me, I would chant in the same way.'"

When the Prophet (pbuh) entered Mecca, he made his way directly to the Ka'bah, which was surrounded by 360 idols. Taking a stick in his hand, he (pbuh) began smashing them one after another, saying, "The truth has come, and falsehood has passed away. The truth has come, and falsehood can neither create nor bring forth anew!"[284] There were still more gods deep inside the Ka'bah; so, unwilling to enter as long as they were there, the Prophet (pbuh) gave orders for them to be removed. When they brought the gods out, they also came upon pictures of Abraham and Ishmael with headless arrows in their hands.[285] "Curses be upon them!" he (pbuh) said, "They know very well that Abraham and Ishmael never engaged in such practices!" Then he entered the Ka'bah and, moving from one spot to another, he repeated the phrase, "God is greatest!"; then he came out without praying inside.[286]

Prior to this, the Prophet (pbuh) had instructed 'Uthman Ibn Talhah (one of the custodians of the Ka'bah) to bring him the key. 'Uthman brought the key, and the Messenger of God (pbuh) opened the door and entered. When he (pbuh) came out again, he called for 'Uthman, returned the key to him and said, "Take this sacred duty upon yourselves as an everlasting trust. It was not I who gave it to you, but God. Hence, no one but an evildoer would seek to take it away from you." In so saying, he (pbuh) was making reference to the words of God Almighty, "Verily, God commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due" (Qur'an 4: 58).

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then called for Bilal, who climbed to the top of the Ka'bah and issued the

call to prayer, and the people began approaching and entering God's religion in great throngs. The Prophet (pbuh) took hold of the doors leading into the Ka'bah, surrounded by people who were uncertain as to what he would do with them. Then he (pbuh) addressed them, saying:

"There is no deity but God alone, who has no partners. Moreover, God has fulfilled His promise and granted victory to His servant, and it is He alone who has defeated the confederates who had amassed themselves against us. Indeed, all the glorious deeds, all the noble lineage, and all the wealth which one might claim for oneself have been placed at my disposal except for the custodianship of the Ka'bah and the privilege of providing food and drink for the pilgrims to Mecca. O people of Quraysh! God has done away with the arrogant pride of the age of ignorance, when people venerated their forefathers. All people are descended from Adam, and Adam was created from dust.

'O mankind! We have created you out of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of God is the one who is most righteous. Verily, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware' (Qur'an 49: 13).

"O men of Quraysh!" he asked, "what do you expect me to do with you?"

"We hope for the best," they replied. "After all, you have been a gracious brother to us and the son of a gracious brother."

"Depart, then. You are free."[287]

On the authority of Abu Shurayh al-'Adwi, Muslim and al-Bukhari include the following words in the speech delivered by the Messenger of God (pbuh) on the day Mecca was conquered:

"Mecca was sanctified by God, not by human beings. No one who believes in God and the Day of Judgment shall be permitted to shed blood or to cut down a tree within its sacred precincts. If anyone should take the liberty to fight here because the Messenger of God (pbuh) once did so, then say to him, 'It is to him (pbuh), not to you, that God has given authorization to take such action; moreover, this authorization has been given even to him (pbuh) only on this day (due to God's wrath against the city's people).[288] And now its sanctity has been restored to what it was in the past, so let those who hear these words inform those who did not."

The people then gathered to pledge their obedience to God and His Apostle (pbuh). After the Prophet (pbuh) had received the men's pledges, he received the women's. Among the Qurayshite women who came to make the pledge was Hind Bint 'Utbah, who wore a veil which covered her entire face on account of the crime she had committed against Hamzah, may God be pleased with him. When the women approached to make their pledges, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "You promise me not to associate any partners with God."

To this Hind replied, "Why, you are asking something of us that you did not ask of the men! But we will give it you anyway."

"Nor will you steal," he (pbuh) said.

"Well," Hind said, "if I took some trifling bit of Abu Sufyan's money, I wonder if that would be all right?"

Abu Sufyan, who heard what she had said, replied, "Anything you've taken in the past, you will not be held accountable for."

"So then, are you Hind Bint 'Utbah?" asked the Prophet (pbuh).

"Yes, I am," she said. "Please forgive me for what I did in the past, and may God forgive you as well."

"Nor shall you commit adultery," he (pbuh) continued.

"Would a self-respecting free woman do such a thing anyway?!" she asked.

"Nor shall you put your newborn infants to death," he (pbuh) said.

"We raised young children to adulthood, then you killed them at Badr," she retorted, "so you and they would know better than anyone else (that we did not do what you speak of)!"

When 'Umar heard this, he laughed until he nearly split his sides.

The Prophet (pbuh) continued, "Nor shall you commit any evil with your bodily members."

Hind said, "This is certainly a reprehensible thing, but it would be preferable to show some tolerance."

"Nor shall you disobey any command I give you," he (pbuh) said.

Then, turning to 'Umar, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "You receive their pledges, and ask them to seek the Messenger of God's forgiveness."

Hence, 'Umar received the women's pledges. As for the Messenger of God (pbuh), he did not shake the women's hands or touch any woman whom God had not made lawful to him.[289]

Al-Bukhari relates the following on the authority of A'ishah, who said, "Based on this verse of the Qur'an,[290] the Prophet (pbuh) used to receive the women's pledges solely with an exchange of words; his hand never touched that of any woman who did not belong to him."[291]

On the day when Mecca was conquered, Umm Hani', daughter of Abu Talib, took a certain polytheist under her protection. However, it so happened that (her brother), 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, wanted to kill this man. Umm Hani' says, "I came to see the Prophet (pbuh), and I found him bathing, with his daughter Fatimah concealing him from others with a robe. I greeted him (pbuh), and he asked, "Who is it?"

"Umm Hani' Bint Abi Talib," I replied.

"Welcome, Umm Hani'," he (pbuh) said.

When he had finished bathing, he prayed eight cycles of prayer wrapped in a single robe.

I said to him (pbuh), "O Messenger of God, my brother 'Ali claims that he is going to kill a man by the name of Ibn Hubayrah, to whom I have pledged my protection."

The Messenger of God (pbuh) replied, "Whoever you have promised to protect, Umm Hani', we shall protect."[292]

As for the group of people whom the Messenger of God (pbuh) had said could be killed with impunity, some of them were put to death, while others became Muslims. Al-Huwayrith, 'Abdullah Ibn Khatal, and Miqyas Ibn Hubabah were killed; one of the two slave girls who had satirized the Prophet (pbuh) in song was killed, while the other became a Muslim. As for 'Abdullah Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abi Sarh, intercession was made for him, and when he embraced Islam, he became a righteous, sincere believer. 'Ikrimah, Habbar, and Hind Bint 'Utbah also became Muslims.

Ibn Hisham relates that a man by the name of Fudalah Ibn 'Umayr al-Laythi[293] wanted to kill the Prophet (pbuh) as he circumambulated the Ka'bah in the year Mecca was conquered. When Fudalah approached him (pbuh), he said, "Is that you, Fudalah?"

"Yes, it is I, O Messenger of God," he replied.

"What were you thinking to yourself?" he (pbuh) asked him.

"Nothing," Fudalah replied, "I was just remembering God."

"The Prophet (pbuh) laughed and said, "Ask God's forgiveness!"

Then he placed his hand on Fudalah's chest and kept it there until his heart was calmed.

After this, Fudalah used to say, "I swear to God, by the time he took his hand off my chest, I loved him more than any other creature on earth!"

As Fudalah was returning home, he passed by a woman that he fancied and had been accustomed to speaking with.

"Come talk with me," she said.

In reply, he uttered these lines:

"Come talk with me," she said. "No," said I,

"for God and Islam forbid me.

Had you seen Muhammad and his host on the day of conquest,

On the day when the idols were shattered,

You would have seen God's religion bright as the sun,

And the face of idolatry enveloped in gloom.

Al-Bukhari relates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that for nineteen days the Prophet (pbuh) remained in Mecca, shortening his prayers and performing only two cycles each time.

Lessons and Principles

Once we are familiar with the events of the magnificent conquest with which God honored his Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Companions, we can appreciate the value of the mission that preceded it and the divine wisdom to be found therein; in addition, we gain insight into the significance of the Muslims' prior exodus, and of the sacrifice of land, country, wealth, and familial and tribal bonds for the sake of Islam. For as long as Islam was alive and well, none of these things would be lost; if, on the other hand, they had lost Islam, none of these treasures would have been of any use to them. Now that you have reflected on the events associated with this great victory, you will realize the value of the jihad, the martyrdom, and the tribulations which were suffered prior to its occurrence. None of this suffering was in vain, and not a drop of a single Muslim's blood was shed without cause. Nor did the Muslims endure the arduous battles and expeditions which they undertook simply because the winds of fortune had taken them by surprise, as it were. Rather, all of this had taken place according to a calculation. It was all part of the price of victory. And this is God's way with His servants: There can be no victory without sound Islam, nor sound Islam without submission to Him. Nor can there be submission without effort, sacrifice, humble supplication in His presence and struggle for His sake.

In light of the foregoing, we can also see the importance of the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah. By going beyond the outward appearances which initially caused such bewilderment to 'Umar and many of the other Companions, we gain a sense of the divine wisdom that lay behind this truce; we understand why God referred to it as a "victory," saying, "And He has ordained (for you), besides this, a victory soon to come" (Qur'an 48: 27); and we appreciate the prophethood which was the motive force behind the life of the Messenger of God (pbuh).

Do you recall the day when the Prophet (pbuh) stole out of his home city, Mecca? Hiding in mountain passes and ravines, he made his way to Yathrib where some of his few, oppressed comrades had already preceded him, and where others of them would follow. Do you recall how all of them had abandoned wealth, family, and land in order to cling to their religion? These same individuals – who had multiplied after being a tiny band, and who had grown strong after being weak – had now returned to their

homeland, their families, and their possessions. These same individuals were now received with deference, meekness, and submission by those who had once expelled them. Indeed, the people of Mecca entered God's religion in large throngs, and Bilal the Abyssinian, who had been tortured for so long by the polytheists in the hot sands of Mecca, ascended to the top of the blessed Ka'bah and cried in a loud voice, "God is greatest! God is greatest!"

The voice of the one who had once whispered, "One! One! One!" as a whip tore into his flesh was now ringing out from above God's Ka'bah, saying, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God!" while everyone gave ear in humble submission. Indeed, there is a single, unrivaled truth, namely, Islam. How foolish and ignorant human beings are when they struggle or exert themselves in any cause other than that of Islam, for when they do so, they are struggling for the sake of a baseless, futile illusion.

The events of this great victory contain numerous lessons and principles which we would do well to reflect upon and understand. In what follows, we shall mention the relevant points based on the order of the events themselves:

Regarding the truce and its violation:

One: The causative event which led to the conquest of Mecca serves as evidence that if those who have entered into a covenant or truce with the Muslims go to war against people who are under the Muslims' protection, they automatically declare themselves at war with the Muslims as well and, as such, there no longer remains any covenant between them.This view is agreed upon by all Muslim jurists.

Two: The manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) approached Mecca indicates that it is permissible for the Muslims' leader to launch a surprise attack on the enemy if the latter has betrayed a covenant between them. As we have seen, when the Prophet (pbuh) had prepared himself to set out for Mecca, he (pbuh) prayed, "O God, blind the eyes of the Qurayshites, and let them not see me until it is too late for them to prepare themselves!" This, likewise, is a view which is shared by the majority of Muslim scholars.

However, if no actual treason has occurred but, instead, there is simply the fear that treason might occur on the basis of convincing evidence, the Imam is not permitted to renounce the Muslims' covenant with the other party and launch a surprise attack on them. Rather, he is obliged first to inform all those concerned. Thus, God says, "If you (O Muhammad) fear treachery from any people (with whom you have made a covenant), throw it back at them (so as to be) on equal terms.[294]. Verily, God does not like the treacherous!" (Qur'an 8: 58)

Three: The manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) responded to this situation indicates that if some members of the community which has entered into a covenant with the Muslims take the step of renouncing it, then – so long as the other members of the community do not openly, decisively condemn this step -- this is tantamount to the entire community's having repudiated the covenant. When the Qurayshite community as a whole failed to speak out against the attack which some of its members had launched against the Muslims' allies, the Prophet (pbuh) took this as sufficient evidence that the entire community had broken faith with the covenant. The basis for this reasoning is that when the Qurayshites first entered into the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah, they did so by virtue of what their leaders and representatives had done; hence, conversely, when their leaders and representatives violated this truce, the community as a whole was seen as having done the same.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) put to death all of Banu Qurayéah's fighting men without asking each one individually whether he had violated the covenant between them and the Muslims. Similarly in the case of Banu al-Nadir, he (pbuh) evicted all of them due to their betrayal of the covenant which had existed between them and the Muslims, despite the fact that the betrayal had been initiated by only a few individuals.

Regarding Hatib Ibn Abi Balta ‘ah and what he did:

One: This incident presents us with a further manifestation of the prophethood of the Messenger of God (pbuh) and of the revelation by means of which he was upheld by his majestic Lord. He (pbuh) sent out some of his Companions, saying, “Keep going until you come to the Khakh Garden, and there you will find a woman seated in a sedan chair who has a letter. Get the letter and bring it to me.”

Who was it that informed the Prophet (pbuh) of the existence of this letter, and of what had transpired in this connection between the woman seated in the sedan chair and Hatib Ibn Abi Balta ‘ah? It was a divine revelation, and as such, it was a manifestation of his prophethood; moreover, by means of it God upheld His Apostle (pbuh) and ensured the great victory with which He intended to honor His Prophet and the Muslims.

Two: Is it permissible to torture someone suspected of a crime in order to get him to confess? Based on ‘Ali’s statement to the woman, “Show us the letter, or we will relieve you of your clothing,” some thinkers have concluded that the Imam or his representative has the right to adopt whatever means he believes necessary to bring a crime to light.

Another incident which is cited as evidence for this position is that at the time of the Battle of Khaybar, some of the Jews concealed money which had belonged to Huyayy Ibn Akhtab. The Prophet (pbuh) asked Huyayy’s uncle, “What became of the leather (money) pouch which Huyayy brought from Banu al-Nadir (to Khaybar)?”

The uncle replied, “It was all used up on living expenses and war.”

The Prophet objected, “But it has not been that long since he died, and it was quite a large sum.”

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then sent the man to al-Zubayr, who tortured him until he said, “I once saw Huyayy walking around some nearby ruins.”

So they went and walked around the same area, and found the leather pouch.

Some modern-day scholars attribute this view to Imam Malik, may God be pleased with him; however, the view which is agreed upon by Malik, al-Shafi’i, Ibn Hanbal, and Abu Hanifah, along with most other scholars, is that no suspect may be subjected to torture for the purpose of extracting a confession so long as his guilt has not been confirmed on the basis of sufficient, legally valid evidence. Rather, it is clear from the teaching of both Malik and other Muslim scholars that a suspect is innocent until proven guilty.

As for the woman in the sedan chair who had been sent to Mecca by Hatib Ibn Abi Balta‘ah and the threat she received from ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, this is an entirely different situation for two reasons: Firstly, the accusation which was directed against this woman was not based on a mere suspicion, but on an established fact, since the relevant report had come from the most trustworthy of all people, Muhammad (pbuh). This being the case, the information which ‘Ali possessed about the woman was even more reliable than a confession would have been. How, then, can she be compared with someone who is accused of wrongdoing based on nothing but the suspicions and doubts of ordinary human beings? And the same applies to Huyayy Ibn Akhtab’s uncle.

Secondly, taking the woman’s clothes off in order to search for the letter from Hatib Ibn Abi Balta‘ah

would have been something quite different from torture or confinement. Since it was an established fact that she did, in fact, have the letter with her, and if there had been no way to gain access to it but to search her clothing, this would have been a legitimate measure; in fact, given the Messenger of God's command to bring the letter back, this would have been a duty. As for al-Zubayr's torturing of Huyayy Ibn Akhtab's uncle, this was based, as we mentioned above, on an established fact, not a mere accusation. In addition, it was done in connection with a state of war between the Muslims and others; as a consequence, it would make no sense to draw an analogy between this and the way in which Muslims are to deal with each other in peacetime.

We read in al-Mudawwanah[295] the following quote from Imam Malik:

Q: If a suspect confesses after being subjected to threats, restrictions, beating or imprisonment, should the punishment for his deed still be inflicted upon him?

A: Anyone who confesses to his misdeed after being subjected to threats is to be absolved. And I consider restrictions, warnings, imprisonment, and beating all to be different forms of threat.

Q: If, after the suspect has been subjected to beating and threats, he brings forth the body of the person he murdered or the goods which he stole, should he still be punished for what he did?

A: I would not inflict the prescribed punishment upon someone unless he had made his confession without having been made to fear what would happen otherwise.[296]

Third: The Prophet's response to what Hatib Ibn Abi Balta'ah did, as well as the Qur'anic verses which were revealed in connection with the same event, indicate that Muslims are not permitted under any circumstances to take God's enemies as their allies, protectors, or friends. This remains true despite the excuse offered by Hatib to the effect that he was closely associated with Quraysh but had no one within the tribe to protect or defend him and that, as a consequence, he hoped to win the approval of some tribal members on whom he could depend for protection in the future.

The Qur'anic verses which were revealed in this connection command the Muslims to reserve their allegiance for God alone, and to base their relations with others on their allegiance to this pristine religion of truth. Otherwise, how could the Muslims be expected to sacrifice their wealth, their desires, their lusts, and their very lives for the sake of God Almighty? This, in fact, is the problem of many people who count themselves Muslims in this day and age: They come to the mosque to pray, they utter formulas in praise of God and recite various sections of the Qur'an associated with specific times of the day devoted to worship, and their prayer beads are constantly clicking in their hands. However, they base their relationships with other people on familial and tribal loyalties, material, worldly interests, or personal desires and ambitions. It matters not to them if, in so doing, they sell the truth for falsehood or exploit the religion of God as a facade for base worldly desires! These are the hypocrites because of whom Muslims are suffering from backwardness, disunity, and infirmity, and whose insincerity weakens Muslims in the face of the various plots which are woven against them and their religion.

Abu Sufyan and the Messenger of God's attitude toward him:

On the day Mecca was conquered, Abu Sufyan – without whose supervision, direction, and encouragement not a single expedition against the Muslims had ever departed from Mecca – was the first one to warn his people not to resist the Messenger of God (pbuh); he was also among the first of the city's inhabitants to enter God's religion.

Perhaps it was part of the divine wisdom and providence that Mecca, whose people had persecuted, expelled, and waged war on the Messenger of God (pbuh), should be conquered without appreciable resistance and without great effort or risk on the Muslims' part. The way had been paved for Abu Sufyan's conversion through the encounter which took place between him and the Messenger of God (pbuh) at Marr al-èahran, after which he returned to Mecca to direct his people's thinking away from warfare and armed struggle. In so doing, he created an atmosphere conducive to a peaceful transition in which the Meccans' former life of ignorance and idolatry would be brought to an end, and in which the sun of belief in and surrender to the one God would rise at last.

As we have seen, following Abu Sufyan's conversion the Prophet announced that anyone who entered Abu Sufyan's house would be safe from harm. In addition to setting the stage for a peaceful conquest of the city, this step served to provide encouragement to Abu Sufyan himself, thereby helping to strengthen his faith and undergird his loyalty to Islam and the Muslims. As you are aware, Islam involves acceptance of both the religion's practical requirements and its doctrinal components. Once a person has embraced Islam, he must commit himself to applying the principles of Islam and fulfilling its concomitant duties; this, in turn, will help to strengthen his faith and root this faith in his heart. And one of the most significant contributors to a person's ability to persist and attain to a stable faith is the encouragement provided by other Muslims by whatever legitimate means are available; then, with time, belief is rooted in the new believer's heart and his faith becomes strong enough to withstand whatever trials may come his way.

When the Helpers heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) announcing that whoever entered Abu Sufyan's house would be safe, some of them lost sight of this important piece of wisdom. Hence, they concluded that the only reason he (pbuh) would say such a thing was that he felt nostalgic toward his hometown and the people with whom he had grown up!

Muslim narrates on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, may God be pleased with him, that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) made this statement, the Helpers began saying to each other, "Homesickness and compassion for his own tribe have gotten the better of him!" However, Abu Hurayrah continues, "then a revelation descended upon him (pbuh), and whenever that happened, we were all aware of it. As long as he (pbuh) was still receiving the revelation, none of us dared look at him. But then the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, 'O company of Helpers!'

'Here we are, O Messenger of God!' we replied.

'You said that homesickness had gotten the better of me.'

'Yes, we did,' we confessed.

'On the contrary,' he (pbuh) said. 'I am God's servant and messenger, and I left my homeland for God's sake and yours. If you live, I live, and if you die, I die!'

When we heard this, we all gathered around him (pbuh) weeping and saying, 'We swear to God, we only said what we did out of our love and zeal for God and His Messenger!'"

In order to gain a proper understanding of Abu Sufyan's conversion, one needs to perceive the distinction between the mere profession of Islam and inward faith. As we noted earlier, when the Prophet (pbuh) said to him, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! Has the time not come for you to know that I am the Messenger of God?" he replied, "As for this (recognition), something in my soul still holds back from it." Following this, al-'Abbas told him, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! Surrender yourself to God and bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, before you lose your head!" So he uttered the confession of the truth, and entered Islam.

The difficulty here is that someone might ask, "What is the value of a profession of faith that was made under threat? After all, just a moment earlier he had said that he had reservations about recognizing Muhammad (pbuh) as God's Messenger and Prophet?!" However, the difficulty resolves itself if one remembers that, as we have noted, what is required of the idolater or someone else who has been denying the truth when he professes Islam is not a well-established, complete, heartfelt faith from the very start. Rather, what is required of such a person is simply to surrender his tongue and his entire being to the religion of God Almighty. In so doing, he places himself in subjection to the one God and pledges his submission to God's Messenger (pbuh) and to everything which God Almighty has revealed to him. As for a solid, heartfelt faith, this will grow as he continues to cling steadfastly to Islam's teachings and practices. It is for this reason that God states in His holy book:

"The Bedouins say, 'We have believed.' Say: 'You do not believe, but you only say, 'We have surrendered (in Islam),' for faith has not yet entered your hearts'" (Qur'an 49: 14).

For this reason also, a Muslim must never attribute the profession of faith by an infidel during battle to the fear of death or to the desire for a share in the spoils, regardless of the evidence he may have in favor of such a conclusion, since what is required in such a situation is not to control what is inside the person's heart and conscience, but rather, to reform that which is outward and visible. Hence, when the Prophet (pbuh) was sending out armed delegations of his Companions to the various tribes on the Arabian Peninsula and one of the Companions killed someone who had professed Islam because he suspected that he had merely done so out of fear of the sword, God Almighty revealed the following words: "O you who believe! When you go (to fight) in God's Cause, verify (the truth), and do not say to anyone who wants to greet you (by embracing Islam): 'You are not a believer'; seeking the perishable gains of the worldly life. There are more profits and booties with God. You, too, were once the same as he is now, but God has conferred on you His favors (i.e. guided you to Islam). Therefore, be cautious in discrimination. Verily, God is Ever Well Aware of what you do" (Qur'an 4: 94).

Note how God reminds them of the condition they themselves were in when they first embraced Islam; for many of them at that time had been like the people whose faith they now doubted. However, God was gracious to them and their faith was purified and strengthened as they continued to live out the precepts of Islam on a practical, day-to-day level.

After Abu Sufyan professed Islam, it was wise, indeed, of the Messenger of God (pbuh) to instruct al-'Abbas to stand with him at the head of the ravine where God's soldiers would be passing by, since in this way, he could see with his own eyes how the power of Islam had grown and what a transformation had

been undergone by the tiny, weak, destitute band who had once fled from Mecca! The sight of the Muslim soldiers in all their strength and glory would thus serve to confirm his newly professed beliefs and establish him on the path of his newly adopted religion. Still under the influence of the illusions and ignorance which had shaped his thinking for so long, Abu Sufyan was bewildered and amazed as he looked at the battalions passing by in steady succession, so he turned and said to al-'Abbas, "Your nephew's kingdom has grown mighty, indeed!" As for al-'Abbas, he dispelled Abu Sufyan's illusions, saying, "It is not a kingdom, Abu Sufyan – it is prophethood! What 'kingdom' is this of which you speak? When you offered him (pbuh) worldly power, wealth and prestige in Mecca, he cast it all aside, preferring to be subjected to torture and persecution at your hands rather than surrender to such a temptation. Why was it that you obliged him to depart from his home country, if not because he refused to accept the worldly power you had offered him as a substitute for the prophetic message which he had been inviting you believe in?"

This, indeed, is prophethood!

These words – which reflect the nature of the Prophet's life from beginning to end -- were placed in al-'Abbas's mouth by the divine wisdom so that on the Day of Judgment, all those who mistakenly believe, or who have knowingly misled others into believing, that the Prophet's mission was nothing but a facade for the desire to control others or to revive some sort of nationalist pride or tribal allegiance will have to answer to God himself. Every moment of his (pbuh) life bore witness to the fact that he had been sent not to engage in the self- aggrandizement of some earthly potentate, but to deliver God's message to people.

Reflections on the Prophet's entry into Mecca:

First: We learn from al-Bukhari's narrative on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn al-Mughaffal that when the Prophet (pbuh) was on the outskirts of Mecca he was reciting Chapter 48 of the Qur'an, entitled, "Victory" in a resonant, melodious voice. What this tells us is that as he was about to enter the city, he (pbuh) was taken up in an experience of the presence of God. The elation that normally accompanies such a great victory had no power over his soul, nor did he have any sense of arrogant pride or desire to demonstrate his power over others; rather, his emotions and his conduct were in perfect conformity with the experience of God's presence and thanksgiving for the succor and victory which He had provided.

This depiction of the state of the Prophet's soul as he entered Mecca is supported by Ibn Ishaq's statement that when he (pbuh) reached Dhu Tuwá, he was so humbled by the sight of the victory God had bestowed upon him, he bowed his head until his beard nearly touched his saddle. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) beheld the fruit of his having carried out his Lord's command and all the suffering he had endured at the hands of his people, and when he reflected on how God had brought him back powerful, victorious, and highly esteemed to the city which had once expelled him, he was filled with a spirit of thanksgiving and humble devotion to God Almighty.

This, moreover, is how Muslims ought to live everywhere and at all times: in a state of absolute dedication to God in ease and hardship, in weakness and in strength. Muslims have no business putting on a show of brokenness and humiliation before God whenever catastrophe or tribulation comes their way, only to do a pendulum swing to a state of wild euphoria, and even a sense of invincibility, as soon as their suffering is relieved, going about their business with no attention to God's commands and precepts as though it was not they who had pleaded with Him in such abject subservience to bring an end to their misfortune!

Second: Another lesson to be derived from this narrative of al-Bukhari's is that it is legitimate to employ a vibrant, quavering voice when chanting the Qur'an, which represents the sense that 'Abdullah Ibn al-Mughaffal called "al-tarji'" (i.e., recurring"); this is agreed upon by the majority of the Shafi'ite scholars and Hanifite schools, and by many of the Malikite school as well. As for texts narrated on the authority of many of the Companions and their Successors[297] which indicate that such melodious, emotion-laden recitation of the Qur'an is forbidden, these scholars understand them to apply only to a manner of recitation or chanting which interferes with the proper pronunciation of the letters and words of the Qur'an.

Third: It was prudent planning on the part of the Messenger of God (pbuh) that he commanded his Companions to distribute themselves among the various entry points to Mecca rather than allowing all of them to enter from a single point. In so doing, he (pbuh) deprived the people of Mecca of the opportunity to fight, since if they had attempted to do so, they would have had no choice but to divide up their military units and disperse their forces throughout Mecca, thereby impairing their ability to put up an effective resistance. The Messenger of God (pbuh) handled the situation in this manner in order to reduce bloodshed to a minimum in the sacred city; toward this same end, he (pbuh) ordered the Muslims not to fight anyone unless they were attacked first and announced that whoever went into his home and closed the door would be safe from harm.

Rulings related to the Meccan precincts:

One: The prohibition against warfare there. As we have seen, when the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions entered Mecca, he forbade them to fight unless the initiative came from others, the only exception to this ruling being six men who were to be put to death wherever they were found. We also saw that when the Prophet (pbuh) saw the glint of swords in the distance and realized that Khalid Ibn al-Walid was fighting some of the Meccans, he condemned Khalid's action. When he (pbuh) was told that Khalid was only responding to an attack from the Meccans, he said, "God's decree is best." However, this was the only armed clash which occurred in Mecca.

When addressing the people on the day of the conquest, he (pbuh) said,

Mecca was sanctified by God, not by human beings. No one who believes in God and the Day of Judgment shall be permitted to shed blood or to cut down a tree within its sacred precincts. And if anyone should take the liberty to fight here because the Messenger of God (pbuh) once did so, then say to him, 'It is to him (pbuh), not to you, that God has given authorization to take such action; moreover, this authorization has been given even to him (pbuh) only on this day (due to God's wrath against the city's people). And now its sanctity has been restored to what it was in the past... ."

Most scholars interpret these words to mean that fighting is not permitted in Mecca or its environs, since the Prophet (pbuh) expressly forbade this on the day of its conquest.

However, there has also been discussion among them as to how this prohibition is to be applied in practical terms and, specifically, how to reconcile it with those texts which contain the command to wage war on polytheists and those who declare open rebellion against the rightful Imam, and to put to death those whose crimes call for capital punishment. As for polytheists and atheists, say these scholars, the problem would not arise in connection with them in the first place, since it is clearly established in Islamic law that no one who professes any religion other than Islam may be allowed to reside in Mecca; in fact, according to scholars of the Shafi'ite school as well as many others qualified to issue independent legal rulings, such people are forbidden even to enter the city. This view is based on the words of God Almighty, "O you who believe! Verily, the polytheists are impure, and so do not let them approach the Inviolable House after this year" (Qur'an 9: 28).[298] Those who reside in Mecca, then, are duty bound to wage war on any non-Muslim who would seek to enter the city before he arrives there. God has promised to protect the sacred precincts from desecration resulting from idolaters and others who reject the truth, and the fulfillment of this promise, which we have received through the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions, is one more manifestation of the miraculous nature of this religion of ours.

As for those who openly rebel against obedience to the rightful Imam, it is agreed upon by the majority of scholars that if there is no other way to dissuade them from their rebellion, they must be met with force of arms. Due to the inviolable nature of the divine right to ensure such obedience, this takes precedence over the prohibition against fighting within the holy city. Al-Nawawi states in this regard, "This majority view is correct, and it is documented by al-Shafi'i in his book, Ikhtilaf al-hadith."[299] Al-Shafi'i says, "As for the hadith which appear to contain an absolute prohibition of armed conflict within Mecca (that is, including armed attacks even on those who openly declare themselves in rebellion against the rightful Imam), one may interpret them as prohibiting the use of instruments of collective warfare, such as

catapults and the like, when there are other ways to resolve the conflict. However, if the unbelievers or rebels fortify themselves somewhere outside Mecca, it is permissible to wage war against them by any and all means available." Other scholars hold that those who openly rebel against the rule of the rightful Imam may not be resisted with force, but that instead, pressure of various sorts is to be placed upon them until they are obliged either to go elsewhere or to desist from their rebellion.[300]

As for the punishments prescribed by Islamic law for various criminal offenses, both Malik and al-Shafi'i hold that they are to be enforced within Mecca; they base this view on the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari according to which the Prophet (pbuh) said, "There is no protection in Mecca for the disobedient, or for fugitive murderers or thieves." Abu Hanifah, on the other hand, whose view is based on that of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, holds that such an outlaw remains safe as long as he remains within the sacred precincts; however, he is to be placed under such severe pressure that he has no choice but to leave, at which point the prescribed punishment may be brought to bear against him. This latter view finds its support in the statements made by the Prophet (pbuh) concerning Mecca on the day it was conquered.

Al-Zarkashi states,

The ruling on fighting within the Meccan precincts is that if those who deny the truth or who have declared themselves in rebellion against the rightful Imam fortify themselves in some location outside Mecca, it is permissible to wage an all-out war on them, using whatever means are consistent with the Muslims' best interests; if, on the other hand, they remain within Mecca, it is forbidden to fight them in this manner.[301]

However, as we have noted above, God Almighty has pledged to make Mecca a place of refuge and return for Muslims alone; if this is the case, then, there would be no reason to fight there unless it were to carry out the prescribed punishments for specified crimes or to confront those who have rejected the rule of the rightful Imam.

Two: The prohibition against hunting. This prohibition is unanimously agreed upon based upon the hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) states, "Within the Meccan precincts, not a thorn is to be cut, nor are its wild animals to be driven away." If, then, it is forbidden even to drive or frighten animals away, it goes without saying that their destruction would be prohibited. If someone catches a wild animal, he is to release it, and if it should die or become ill when still in his possession, he must make atonement by offering a compensatory sacrifice such as those one would offer when in a state of ritual consecration for the major or minor pilgrimage. He (pbuh) made five exceptions to this prohibition, namely, crows, kites, scorpions, mice, and rapacious dogs. Based on what is judged to be their common characteristic of harmfulness, other animals – such as snakes and other predators – are also excluded from this prohibition.

Three: The ban on cutting any of its plant life. The basis for this ban is the phrase in the previously quoted hadith, "not a thorn is to be cut." Specifically, one is not allowed to cut plants which grow wild, and which are still moist. There is no prohibition against cutting cultivated plants or dry trees and wild plants, just as it is not forbidden to slaughter livestock or to use its open country and the plants found there for grazing. Even so, al-Zarkashi quotes Abu Hanifah and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal as stating that it is forbidden to graze livestock in Mecca![302]

Moreover, similar to the analogy drawn by scholars based on the five exeptions made by the Prophet (pbuh) to the hunting ban, most scholars likewise exclude from the cutting ban those plants which are judged to be harmful.[303]

Four: The requirement that one enter Mecca in a state of ritual consecration. When someone comes to Mecca or any part thereof – provided that one is not obliged to go in and out of the city repeatedly by virtue of one's profession as is the case for woodcutters, merchants, and others -- he must be in a state of

ritual consecration just as he would be if he intended to perform the major or minor pilgrimage.

However, there is disagreement among Muslim scholars as to whether this is a requirement, or simply a recommended action. According to the Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali schools, as well as narratives on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, it is a requirement; however, those of the Shafi'i school hold it to be nothing but a recommendation. The reason for this difference of opinion is that when the Prophet (pbuh) entered Mecca on the day it was conquered, he was wearing a turban on his head, and he was not in a state of ritual consecration. Those who hold that it is merely recommended that one be in such a state when entering Mecca base their view on this hadith. As for those who hold it to be a requirement, they state that the reason the Prophet (pbuh) was not dressed as a pilgrim is that he (pbuh) feared treachery on the part of the unbelievers and was prepared to fight any of them who might resist him; in this situation, they say, one is exempted from such a requirement.

Five: The prohibition against allowing non-Muslims to reside in Mecca. This ruling was explained above in the context of our discussion of the prohibition against armed conflict in Mecca.

Reflections on the actions taken by the Prophet (pbuh) at the Sacred Ka'bah:

One: Prayer inside the Ka'bah. We have mentioned the narrative by al-Bukhari on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas according to which he (pbuh) did not enter the Ka'bah until all of the idols had been removed from it, as well as a picture of Abraham and Ishmael holding divining arrows in their hands. After this, he (pbuh) entered and uttered the phrase, "God is greatest!" as he moved about inside it; however, he (pbuh) did not pray.

Muslim narrates a hadith on the authority of Ibn 'Umar according to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) entered the Ka'bah together with Usamah, Bilal, and 'Uthman Ibn Talhah al-Hajabi, after which he (pbuh) closed the door and stayed inside for a period of time. Ibn 'Umar states, "I asked Bilal what the Messenger of God (pbuh) had done while inside and he told me, 'He stood with two pillars to his left, one pillar to his right, and three pillars behind him. (The Ka'bah at that time rested on six pillars.) Then he (pbuh) prayed.'" Al-Bukhari narrates a similar hadith on the authority of Ibn 'Umar.

Muslim scholars hold that there is no contradiction between these two accounts, since Ibn 'Abbas – who narrated the account according to which the Prophet (pbuh) did not pray inside the Ka'bah – was not present with the Messenger of God (pbuh) inside the Ka'bah; rather, at times he relies on a report from Usamah, and at other times he relies on a report from his brother, al-Fadl, even though al-Fadl was not with them at the Ka'bah, either. However, Bilal, according to whom the Prophet (pbuh) did pray in the Ka'bah, was with him (pbuh). Therefore, priority should be given to Ibn 'Umar's account on the authority of Bilal, and this for two reasons: Firstly, Bilal's account is in the affirmative, and affirmations are to be given priority over negations; secondly, Bilal's narrative is based on personal experience, since he was with him (pbuh) inside the Ka'bah, whereas Ibn 'Abbas's account is based on reports from others, namely, Usamah and al-Fadl, the latter of whom was not even present with him (pbuh).

Al-Nawawi says, "hadith scholars unanimously favor Bilal's account, since it is affirmative and is supported by personal knowledge."[304] Al-Shafi'i, Abu Hanifah, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and the majority of other scholars hold that prayers performed within the Ka'bah – be they obligatory or supererogatory – are valid so long as the one praying turns toward one of its walls. However, Malik differs from the others in holding that this applies to purely voluntary prayers, bu tnot to obligatory prayers, Sunnah-based prayers which accompany obligatory prayers, or Sunnah-based prayers which are associated with a particular time or occasion, such as those performed on 'Id al-Fitr, 'Id al-Adhá, etc.[305]

Two: The ruling on pictorial representation and the taking of photographs. We learn from the same hadith narrated by al-Bukhari that he (pbuh) only entered the Ka'bah after all of the pictures and idols had been removed from inside it. Abu Dawud narrates on the authority of Jabir, may God be pleased with him, that the Prophet (pbuh) instructed 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab while he was in al-Batha' to come to the Ka'bah and efface all the pictures inside it, and that he (pbuh) did not enter it until this process was completed. In his section entitled, "The Major Pilgrimage," al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Usamah that when he (pbuh) went inside the Ka'bah and saw the picture of Abraham, he called for water and began washing it off.

Taken together, these hadiths indicate that the Prophet (pbuh) commanded that the drawings etched on

the walls be rubbed out, and that the three-dimensional figures inside it be removed. It also appears that when he (pbuh) came in again later and saw that traces of the original drawings still remained on some of the walls, he called for water and began rubbing them out more thoroughly. This is clear evidence of Islam's stance on representation via both drawings and three-dimensional figures.

In this connection, let us quote the following passage from Imam al-Nawawi's commentary on Sahih Muslim, where he states, "Scholars hold that the pictorial representation of animals is utterly forbidden, a major sin which is sternly warned against in a number of Prophetic hadiths. Moreover, this prohibition applies whether the representation is made of ordinary, everyday materials or of something else, and whether the pictures are placed on a rug, a dirhem, a dinar, a container, a wall or anything else. This is because such representation involves an attempt to imitate the act of creation, which is peculiar to God alone. However, if the representation consists of pictures of trees, saddlebags, or anything else which is not an animal, it is not forbidden."

What we have said thus far has to do with pictorial representation; as for the taking of photographs in which the image of an animal appears, it is forbidden if the resulting picture is hung on a wall, or if it appears on a robe or a turban which is to be worn but which is not for ordinary, everyday use. However, if the image appears on a rug which is walked on, a cushion, a pillow, etc., it is not forbidden. As for whether the angels of mercy will be prevented from entering the house of someone who uses pictures in this manner, we will have more to say on this matter below, God willing.

According to our school's view on such matters, no distinction should be made between things which cast a shadow and things which do not. This same opinion was held by most of the Companions, their Successors, and those who came after them; it also reflects the views of al-Thawri, Malik, Abu Hanifah and others. There are some who hold that there is a prohibition against whatever casts a shadow, whereas pictures that cast no shadow are permissible. However, this point of view is groundless. After all, the curtain which the Prophet (pbuh) condemned because of the images it bore cast no shadow, but it was still considered blameworthy.[306] There are other hadiths as well which speak in categorical terms about pictures. Hence, there is virtually unanimous agreement that whatever casts a shadow is forbidden and must be changed (or removed). However, an exception is made for little girls' dolls.[307]

People sometimes raise questions concerning Islam's stance on photographs. That is, are they to be placed in the same category as pictures which have been drawn by hand? There are some who take al-Nawawi's statements above to mean that photographs are not to be classed together with hand-drawn images, since the act of taking a photograph requires no particular skill such that one could say that the person who took the photograph had been attempting to imitate the creation of God Almighty. After all, the action involved in taking a photograph involves no more than a slight movement of some part of the camera, as a result of which a shadow is captured inside it by means of certain acids. Not only so, but the movement involved is so simple that even a young child could master it.

Nevertheless, if the truth be told, given the categorical manner in which the various Prophetic hadiths speak about this matter, no distinction should be made among the various types of pictorial representation if one wishes to remain on the safe side, as it were. I say this, of course, not out of absolute certainty, but in the interests of caution and godliness. If we wished to delve into the exact nature of the Islamic legal ruling on this issue, we would have to engage in a detailed study of the matter which is beyond the ken of this book. Be that as it may, the subject being photographed will have some influence on the ruling to be adopted concerning it. Thus, for example, if the photographs are of women or of some other subject associated with Islamic prohibitions, they will of course be prohibited. If, on the other hand, the photographs are taken in order to meet a genuine need, then a more lenient stance may be called for.

Some people in this day and age may be astonished that activities such as drawing, photography, and

sculpture could be prohibited in Islam, even though they are considered to be among the most fundamental artistic mainstays of modern civilized nations! The reason for such people's astonishment is that they mistakenly imagine Islam to be in basic agreement with modern-day Western culture, whereas in fact, it stands opposed to particular elements and manifestations thereof. When Islam imposes a ban on these particular artistic expressions, this is due to the fact that Islam possesses its own distinct cultural point of departure which stands in contrast to that of Western civilization. It also bears noting in this connection that Western culture has not been introduced to us by means of some unbiased, reasoned inquiry; rather, it has imposed itself upon us with the assistance of people's propensity for blind imitation. There are those who object to Islam in the name of art; however, what such people forget is that within the Islamic frame of reference, the content of genuine art differs in an essential way from that which emerges from Western philosophy – a philosophy which has virtually nothing in common with the criteria by which we assess things.

Three: The custodianship of the Ka'bah. As noted above, after entering the Ka'bah, the Messenger of God (pbuh) returned the key to 'Uthman Ibn Talhah, then addressed Banu 'Abd al-Dar and Banu Shaybah, saying, "Take this sacred duty upon yourselves as an everlasting trust... No one but an evildoer would seek to take it away from you." The majority of Muslim scholars take this account to mean that no one possesses the right to take the custodianship of the Ka'bah away from either of these two tribes. Quoting from al-Qadi 'Iyad, al-Nawawi states, "The custodianship of the Ka'bah is a prerogative and mandate which the Messenger of God (pbuh) himself bestowed upon these tribes and their descendents for all time. Hence, so long as they are present and capable of undertaking this duty, no one shall challenge their right to it or demand a share therein. And in fact, this function continues to be performed by Banu' Abd al-Dar and Banu Shaybah to this very day in accordance with the Prophet's instructions."

Four: The destruction of the idols. In a marvelous expression of the great victory and support which God had given him, the Prophet (pbuh) went about among the false gods scattered here and there around the Ka'bah, striking them with a stick and saying, "The truth has come, and falsehood has passed away. Truth has come, and falsehood can neither create nor bring forth anew!" Ibn Ishaq and others narrate an account according to which each idol had been fitted out with a lead bottom in order to keep it upright. However, hardly had the Prophet (pbuh) struck them with his stick than they toppled over, either on their faces or their backs, and shattered in pieces! And why should this not have been so, when God Himself had toppled the mighty power of Quraysh, turning their arrogant power into humble subservience and causing Mecca and all of its inhabitants to surrender to the truth which he (pbuh) proclaimed?!

Thoughts on his (pbuh) speech on the day Mecca was conquered

Mecca – the city from which he (pbuh) had emigrated under duress eight years earlier – had submitted to him and was professing its faith in his message and the guidance which he had brought. Here were the very people who for so long had treated him as an enemy, inflicting all manner of suffering upon him, gathered about him (pbuh) in reverent anticipation. So what would he (pbuh) say to them?

First of all, he would have to begin with praise to his Lord, who had given him succor, supported him, and fulfilled His promise to him (pbuh). Thus, he began his address by saying, "There is no deity but God alone, who has no partners. Moreover, God has fulfilled His promise and granted victory to His servant, and it is He alone who has defeated the confederates who had amassed themselves against us."

Having made this declaration, he (pbuh) would need to speak to both Quraysh and others about the new society which was being brought into existence, and which is spoken of in the divine revelation thus: "O mankind! We have created you out of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply fearful of Him" (Qur'an 49: 13). This being the case, it was incumbent upon Muslims to do away with all vestiges of the bigoted pride and prejudices to which they had clung for so long, including their custom of glorying in their forefathers, their ancestries and their languages, and their fierce attachments to their ethnic identities and tribal affiliations. After all, the whole human race is descended from Adam, and Adam was created from dust.

From this moment onward, the Qurayshites' ignorant ways were placed behind them; hence, it was only fitting that all the traditions and customs associated with this ignorance should be abolished as well, and that the Qurayshites should be cleansed of all defilement in order to join the caravan which was moving onward and outward. For in the near future there would be conquests of Persia and Byzantium, and Mecca was to become the birthplace of a new culture and civilization which would clothe the entire world in a robe of all-embracing serenity.

And thus it was that in that very hour, all that remained of the Qurayshites' unenlightened hubris was buried beneath their feet. They promised the Messenger of God (pbuh) to submit themselves to the one God and to recognize that no human being is superior to any other, be he Arab or non-Arab, except insofar as he is more conscious of his Maker, more surrendered to God's ways, and more committed to His obedience. This done, God placed the reins of the entire world in their hands.

And this is what makes it all the more appalling to find that a rank corpse which was buried fourteen centuries ago is, in our day and age, being raised to new life!

The women's pledge of allegiance and related precepts:

One: The woman participates on an equal footing with the man in all responsibilities that belong to the Muslim. Consequently, the caliph or Muslim ruler is to hold both men and women equally responsible for building up Islamic society by all legitimate means available. The Muslim woman has the responsibility to become educated in the affairs of her religion just as the man does, and to do everything in her power to arm herself with knowledge and to become aware of the deceptive methods employed by Islam's enemies in order to do it harm; only in this way will she be able to fulfill the pledge of allegiance to which she has committed herself.

Two: Based on the manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) received the women's pledges of allegiance -- that is, by an exchange of words only rather than a handshake, as in the case of the men's pledges -- we know that a Muslim man is not permitted to make contact with the skin of a strange woman. I am not aware of any disagreement on this point among Muslim scholars, unless such contact is required for purposes of medical treatment, tooth extraction, and the like.

Contrary to what some people mistakenly believe, there is no need to adopt the custom of shaking hands with women. After all, no custom possesses the authority to alter religious rulings which are clearly supported by either the Qur'an or the Prophetic hadiths, unless the ruling in question was based from the start on a widespread societal custom. In this latter case, any alteration in the relevant custom could lead to a change in the religious ruling as well. However, a ruling such as this is a conditional one which depends for its existence on particular circumstances, and as such, it is not relevant to the present study.

Three: The hadiths which we have examined pertaining to the pledges of allegiance indicate that the voice of a strange woman may legitimately be heard when necessary. This is the stance taken by most Muslim jurisprudents, including those of the Shafi'i school, although some of the Hanafi school hold that the voice of a strange woman is not to be heard; however, this latter stance is refuted by sound hadiths pertaining to the pledges of allegiance made by women to the Prophet (pbuh), as well as numerous other hadiths.

Was Mecca conquered peacefully, or by force?

There is disagreement among Muslim scholars on this question; al-Shafi'i, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and others hold that the Prophet (pbuh) entered the city on the basis of a peace treaty, with Abu Sufyan being the Qurayshites' representative to the agreement. As for the agreement itself, its central condition was that all those who entered their homes and closed the door behind them would be safe from harm, as would all those who embraced Islam and those who entered the home of Abu Sufyan. The only persons excluded from this condition were the six men mentioned above, whom the Prophet (pbuh) ordered put to death. Abu Hanifah and Malik, on the other hand, hold that the Prophet (pbuh) entered the city by force based on the fact that he (pbuh) and the Muslims came into Mecca bearing arms and fitted out for war.

However, it is unanimously agreed upon that the Prophet (pbuh) did not gather spoils from any of the Meccans, and that he took no captives. As for those who hold that Mecca was conquered based on a peace treaty, the basis for this view is clear. And as for those who claim that it was conquered by force, they say that what prevented the Messenger of God (pbuh) from taking and distributing booty has to do with features peculiar to Mecca itself. Mecca was, and continues to be, a sacred place devoted to the service of God Almighty, as if it had been set aside specially by the Sustainer of the worlds as a place of worship and devotion for all creatures. It is for this reason that some scholars, including Abu Hanifah, judge it to be impermissible to sell land or houses in Mecca.[308]

This, then, is a summary of some of the rulings and lessons which may be derived from the events associated with the great conquest of Mecca. We shall content ourselves with this number, and God knows best,

The Battle of Hunayn

This battle took place in the month of Shawwal, 8 A.H. Angry and embittered by the victory which God had granted His Apostle (pbuh) and the Muslim believers, the notables of the tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif had come together and amassed a huge army under the command of the chief of Hawazin, Malik Ibn ‘Awf. Before they set out for Awtas (a site located between Mecca and al-Ta’if), Malik ordered the men to bring with them their money, their women, and their children as a means of preventing them from fleeing. On the 6th of Shawwal,[309] as the men of Hawazin and Thaqif were marching toward the Messenger of God (pbuh), the latter set out with a force of 12,000 Muslim fighters, 10,000 of them from Medina, and 2,000 from Mecca.[310]

Meanwhile, the Prophet (pbuh) had sent out a man by the name of ‘Abdullah Ibn Abi Hadrad al-Aslami with instructions to infiltrate the polytheists, live among them, and gather information about them for the Muslims. The Prophet (pbuh) had also been told that Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who at this time was still a polytheist, possessed a good supply of shields and weapons; hence, he (pbuh) sent a word to Safwan requesting some of them. When the request reached Safwan, he said, “So, do you plan to take them by force, O Muhammad?!”

“On the contrary,” the Prophet (pbuh) replied, “we are going only to borrow them, and we promise to return them as well.”

Hence, Safwan gave him (pbuh) one hundred shields and enough weapons to be used along with them.[311]

When Malik Ibn ‘Awf learned that the Apostle (pbuh) was approaching, he mobilized his men, ordering them to scatter throughout the Hunayn Valley and lie in wait there, ready to launch a unified attack on Muhammad (pbuh) and his men as soon as they reached the site. Hence, as the Muslims descended into the valley in the pre-dawn hours, what should they find but that the enemy detachments were coming out against them from all directions in a concerted attack. Seeing the vulnerable position they were in, the fighters quickly retreated, with none of them taking any thought for anyone else.

Moving off toward the right, the Messenger of God (pbuh) called out, “Come this way, O servants of God! I am the Prophet, I deceive you not! I am the son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib!” Muslim narrates the following account on the authority of Ibn al-‘Abbas, may God be pleased with him, who said: During the Battle of Hunayn, Abu Sufyan Ibn al-Harith Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib and I stuck close to the Messenger of God (pbuh) the entire time. The Messenger of God (pbuh) was riding a white mule of his, and when the Muslims and the unbelievers joined in battle and the Muslims turned and fled, he (pbuh) started galloping toward the enemy on his mule. I took hold of his mule’s bridle to get her to slow down, and Abu Sufyan took hold of his stirrup.

Then he (pbuh) said, “Call the companions of the acacia.” [312] (Muslim notes here that al-‘Abbas had a powerful voice.)

So I shouted as loud as I could, “O companions of the acacia!”

And I tell you, they responded to me as readily as a mother cow does when her young call out to her!

"Here we are! Here we are!" they shouted back.

Then they came forward and began fighting the enemy, crying, "O Helpers!"

The Messenger of God (pbuh) looked on as they fought and said, "Now the battle has heated up."

Then he picked up some small pebbles and threw them into the enemies' faces, saying, "By Muhammad's Lord, be defeated!"[313]

At that moment, God cast such terror into the hearts of the polytheists that they lost their fighting spirit and fled for their lives. As for the Muslims, they stayed hot on their trail, slaying and capturing those whom they overtook, and when they returned from the battle, they led captives before the Messenger of God (pbuh). It was on the occasion of this battle that the Messenger of God (pbuh) announced, "If anyone slays an enemy soldier and has clear proof of having done so, he has the right to whatever objects or clothing were in the slain man's possession."[314] Ibn Ishaq and others relate on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik, may God be pleased with him, that at the Battle of Hunayn, Abu Talhah single-handedly slew and despoiled twenty enemy fighters.

Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd relate based on a sound chain of transmission that during this same battle, the Messenger of God (pbuh) turned and saw Umm Sulaym, the daughter of Milhan, who was with her husband, Abu Talhah.

"Umm Sulaym!" he cried.

"Yes, precious Messenger of God!" she replied, "Slay those Muslims who are fleeing from the battle just as you slay those who wage war against you!"

Now, Umm Sulaym had a dagger with her, so Abu Talhah asked her, "What is this dagger that you're carrying, Umm Sulaym?"

"It is a dagger which I got for myself so that if any of those polytheists comes near me, I can slit him open with it!"

At one point, the Prophet (pbuh) passed by a woman who had been slain by Khalid Ibn al-Walid. There were people gathered about the woman's body, and he (pbuh) asked, "What is this?"

"It is a woman that Khalid Ibn al-Walid killed," they replied.

In response, the Messenger of God (pbuh) turned to some of those who were with him and said, "Catch up with Khalid and tell him, 'The Messenger of God forbids you to kill any infant, woman, slave, or hireling.'"[315]

As for Malik Ibn 'Awf, he fled with his men, leaving large amounts of booty behind, and sought refuge in the fortresses at al-Ta'if. In response, the Messenger of God (pbuh) gave instructions for all the booty which the Muslims had obtained to be kept at al-Ji'ranah, giving Mas'ud Ibn 'Amr al-Ghifari the task of keeping guard over it. Then he (pbuh) and those with him set out for al-Ta'if and laid siege to it. The men of Thaqif began shooting arrows at the Muslims from their fortresses, and some of the Muslims were killed. Nevertheless, the Messenger of God (pbuh) kept the city under siege for some ten days, with some holding that the siege continued for more than twenty days.

'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr relates that after this period had elapsed, the Messenger of God (pbuh) announced to his Companions, "We shall turn back, God willing."

"Shall we return before we have forced them to surrender?" some of them asked.

"You may continue fighting them if you wish," he (pbuh) told them.

So they went on fighting, and some of them were wounded.

After this, the Messenger of God (pbuh) told them again, "We shall be turning back tomorrow."

However, the Prophet's orders pleased them this time, which made him laugh.[316]

As they were on their way home, the Prophet (pbuh) told his Companions to say, "Returning, repentant, full of worship and praise for our Lord!"

"O Messenger of God," some of them said, "Call down God's curse upon Banu Thaqif."

But instead he (pbuh) said, "O God, guide Thaqif and bring them here!"[317]

And it wasn't long before Thaqif sent a delegation to the Messenger of God (pbuh) in Medina, declaring their acceptance of Islam.

The Matter of the Spoils and the Manner in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) Distributed Them

Following this, the Prophet (pbuh) returned to al-Ji'ranah, where the captives and the booty which had been taken from the tribe of Hawazin at the Battle of Hunayn were being kept, and he (pbuh) divided up the captives. Then there arrived a delegation from Hawazin, declaring that they had embraced Islam and requesting that the Prophet (pbuh) return to them their money and their people.

In reply, the Prophet said, "With me are those captives which you see before you. And now choose which you will take: either the captives, or the money. I deliberately postponed the distribution of the captives and the money in the hope that you would become Muslims."

(The Prophet (pbuh) had given them a grace period of some ten days after his return from al-Ta'if.)

"O Messenger of God," they said, "if you give us a choice between our people and our money, then our people are more precious to us."

This being said, the Messenger of God (pbuh) rose to speak to the Muslims. After giving due praise to God, he (pbuh) said, "Your brethren have come in repentance, and I am in favor of returning to them those of their people who were taken captive. Hence, whoever of you is willing to approve this, let him do so. And whoever wishes to insist on his right to the share he has received, then let him do so."[318]

All of them shouted, "We approve, O Messenger of God!"

However, he (pbuh) said, "We do not know which of you has agreed to this of his own accord, and which of you has done so grudgingly. Hence, wait now until those among you who possess the greatest knowledge and experience have discussed the matter with you." So the people did as the Prophet (pbuh) had proposed, after which those with knowledge and experience came and informed him (pbuh) that the people had, indeed, given their full consent in the matter.[319] Hence, the captives who had been taken from the Hawazin tribe were returned.

According to an account narrated by Ibn Ishaq, the Messenger of God (pbuh) asked the delegation from Hawazin what had become of Malik Ibn 'Awf, and they told him that he was with the men of Thaqif at al-Ta'if.

So he (pbuh) said to them, "Tell him that if he comes to me as a Muslim, I will restore to him all of his family and his wealth, and I will give him one hundred camels."

After being told this, Malik came in pursuit of the Messenger of God (pbuh), and caught up with him somewhere between al-Ji'ranah and Mecca. As he had promised, the Prophet (pbuh) restored to him his family and his wealth, and gave him one hundred camels. Moreover, Malik became a devout, faithful Muslim.

Following the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet (pbuh) set aside a generous portion of the spoils and other tokens for the Muslims of Mecca as a means of establishing their faith in Islam. However, some of the Helpers resented this, saying, "May God forgive His Messenger! He gives all this to Quraysh and abandons us when our swords are still dripping with their blood (after having fought against them for his (pbuh) sake)!"[320]

When news of what these Companions had said reached the Messenger of God (pbuh), he sent word to them to meet in a place which had been prepared for them alone. Then he (pbuh) rose and, after giving due praise to God, he said, "O company of Helpers! What is this that I hear you have said? Did I not come to you when you were lost in error, and did God not guide you rightly through me? When you were scattered and divided, did God not join your hearts through me? When you were impoverished, did God not enrich you through me?" (Every time he asked them a question, they would answer, "Yes! God and His Messenger have bestowed their grace and favor upon us!")

Then he (pbuh) said, "Will you give me no response, O Helpers?"

"What response can we give you, O Messenger of God?" they replied. "It is God and His Apostle who have bestowed their bounty upon us, not we upon them."

"However, you could have said – and in so saying, you would have been speaking the truth, and you would have been believed – 'You came to us as one who had been branded a liar, and we believed you. You came to us as one abandoned, and we gave you succor; as an outcast, and we took you in; impoverished, and we gave you of our substance till your need was met.'"

"But no," they cried, "it is we who owe thanksgiving to God and His Apostle!"

Then the Messenger of God (pbuh) continued, saying, "O Helpers, did you feel envious and resentful on account of some transient worldly possessions with which I sought to establish others in their faith, trusting you to remain strong in yours?! Are you not content to allow others to take the she-goats and the camels while you return to your campsites with the Messenger of God (pbuh)? Believe me, what you take away with you is of far greater value than what they have been given. I swear by the One who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, if it were not for the fact that I myself am among those who emigrated from Mecca, I would be among the Helpers. If all others took one mountain path, and the Helpers took another, I would follow the one taken by the Helpers. When I am no longer among you, you will encounter those who seek to take the best for themselves. But endure patiently until you meet me at the pool.[321] O God, have mercy upon the Helpers, upon their children, and upon their children's children!"

Then the men wept until their beards were moist with tears, saying, "We are content with God and His Messenger as our portion and our share!"[322]

During this same period, the Prophet (pbuh) was pursued by Bedouin Arabs who wanted him to give them a greater share of the spoils. At one point, they drove him to an acacia tree where his robe got caught.

Turning to them, he (pbuh) said, "Give me my robe back, and I swear by God, if there were as many of you as there are trees in Tihamah,[323] I would still give you a share, and you would not find me to be niggardly, untruthful, or cowardly.[324] Believe me, people, my share of the spoils comes to no more than one-fifth, and even this fifth is returned to you.[325]

One day when the Prophet (pbuh) was wearing a heavy Najrani outer garment, a Bedouin came along and tugged on it so hard that the border of his robe's neck opening dug into his flesh. Then he said to him (pbuh), "Give me some of God's money that you have in your possession."

The Prophet (pbuh) looked at the man, laughed, and gave instructions for the man to be given something.[326]

According to Ibn Ishaq, the Messenger of God (pbuh) then left al-Ji'ranah to perform the minor pilgrimage. Once he (pbuh) had completed the pilgrimage, he returned to Medina, leaving Mecca under the command of 'Attab Ibn Asid.

Lessons and Principles

The Battle of Hunayn may be seen as a lesson in Islamic doctrine and the law of cause of effect similar to that which was inspired by the Battle of Badr and, indeed, a complement to it. For just as the Battle of Badr taught the Muslims that the smallness of their numbers in the face of their enemies' large numbers cannot harm them so long as they are patient and God-fearing, the Battle of Hunayn confirmed to them that unless they are graced with patience and the fear of God, large numbers on their side will do them no good. Moreover, just as verses of the Qur'an were revealed in confirmation of the lessons being taught at Badr, further verses of divine revelation descended in confirmation of the lessons to be learned from Hunayn.

The number of Muslim fighters at the Battle of Badr was fewer than at any other battle; nevertheless, this fact did them no harm due to the sincerity and maturity of their faith and the intensity of their devotion to God and His Messenger. Conversely, the Muslims' numbers at the Battle of Hunayn were greater than at any battle they had ever fought, yet their numerical advantage did them no good due to the presence of fighters among them whose faith was not yet deeply rooted in their hearts, and who had not yet come to a thorough understanding of the meaning of Islam. These soldiers had joined the Muslim army with their outward, physical beings, while inwardly, it was the world and its fleeting allures which still held sway over their thoughts and affections. This being the case, it was impossible that their mere physical presence at the battle would have any positive effect on its outcome.

When these fighters were suddenly confronted by the enemy ambushes, they turned on their heels and fled throughout the Hunayn Valley. It is possible that at the very first, their panic spread to the hearts of many of the true believers as well. However, the minute the Helpers and the Emigrants heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) calling out to them, they rallied once again, gathering about the Prophet (pbuh) and plunging with him into the fray.These men numbered no more than two hundred; nevertheless, it was through these two hundred that the tide of the battle turned in the Muslims' favor, they regained their inward tranquillity, and God enabled them to defeat the enemy. As for the original twelve thousand fighters, their ranks included many who were of no value to themselves or anyone else!

It was in this context that God Almighty revealed the following important lesson:

Truly God has given you victory on many battlefields (when you were few) and on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers, but they proved of no avail whatsoever to you, and the earth, despite being so vast, became (too) narrow for you, then you turned back in flight. Then God did send down His (gift of) inner peace upon His Apostle and upon the believers, and sent down (upon you) forces (angels) which you did not see, and punished the disbelievers. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers! But with all this, God will accept the repentance of whom He wills; for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Qur'an 9: 25-27).

In what follows, we review the lessons and principles which may be derived from the Battle of Hunayn:

One: Sending out spies to bring back news about the enemy. The legitimacy of this type of activity has been mentioned before. It is, in fact, a duty when the need for it arises, and as is agreed by all four Imams, the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Hadrad al-Aslami to bring back news concerning the enemies' numbers and equipment.

Two: Borrowing arms from polytheists in order to fight the enemies of Islam. In addition to arms, this provision includes any sort of equipment or war materiel which the Muslim army might need; moreover, in addition to borrowing, it is permissible to obtain possession of such materials either free of charge or for a price. As we have seen from the account of this battle, the Messenger of God (pbuh) borrowed arms from Safwan Ibn Umayyah when the latter was still a polytheist.

This point falls under the rubric of seeking aid from unbelievers in a time of war, a topic which we

discussed in the context of our comments on the Battle of Uhud. Based on the foregoing, it becomes clear that accepting aid from nonbelievers may be divided into two categories: (1) Employing individuals who are not believers to fight alongside the Muslims; as we stated in our discussion of the Battle of Uhud, this is a step which may be taken if the need arises, and if the Muslims have good reason to believe that the individuals concerned are people of honesty and integrity. (2) Making use of non-Muslims' material possessions, such as arms or other equipment. It is agreed upon that this practice is legitimate, provided that: (a) it involves no violation of the Muslims' honor, (b) it does not require the Muslims to come under the authority of others, and (c) it does not oblige them to neglect any of their religious obligations. It bears noting in this connection that when Safwan Ibn Umayyah lent weapons to the Messenger of God (pbuh), he was in the position of the weak, defeated party, while the Prophet (pbuh) was in the position of power.[327]

Three: The Prophet's courage in battle. In the situation where the majority of the Muslim fighters had scattered in flight, we catch a rare glimpse of this daring and courage. With the others fleeing for their lives, no one was left in the thick of the fray but the Messenger of God (pbuh), who was hemmed in on all sides by the enemy ambushes which had come so suddenly upon them. Rather than retreating with the rest, he (pbuh) demonstrated an extraordinary resolve whose effects reached into the souls of his fleeing Companions, enabling them to regain their self-composure and determination.

After narrating the events of the Battle of Hunayn, Ibn Kathir states,

Here is an illustration of consummate heroism. On such a day as this, in the thick of the fray, his army in a state of utter weakness and vulnerability and he on the back of mule not swift enough to attack, retreat, or escape, he (pbuh) chose nevertheless to gallop it straight toward the enemy, shouting out his name for the sake of those who had not yet recognized that it was he – may blessings and peace be upon him ceaselessly, from now till the Day of Judgment. And what could account for such behavior but trust in God, reliance upon Him, and full assurance that He would support him and bring to completion that for which He had sent him (pbuh), granting victory to his religion over all others?[328]

Four: Women's going out to battle with men. With respect to treating the wounded and giving drink to the thirsty, there are sound hadiths which indicate that Muslim women engaged in such activities in a number of battles. As for their going out to fight, there is nothing in the Sunnah to support this. Imam al-Bukhari includes a section in his chapter on Jihad entitled, "On Women's Going Out to Battle with Men." However, the hadiths which he cites in this regard contain nothing to indicate that women actually took part with men in combat. Ibn Hajar comments on this, saying, "I find no hadiths on this topic which state explicitly that women entered combat."[329]

According to Muslim jurisprudents, if the enemy launches an unexpected attack on a Muslim community, then everyone, including women, has the duty to come out against the aggressors. However, women must not be expected to do more than engage in defense.[330] As for the dagger which Umm Sulaym was carrying, it was merely for the purpose of self-defense, as she herself said.

It is in light of the foregoing that we are to understand the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, who asked the Messenger of God for permission to engage in jihad, and he (pbuh) replied, "Your (women's) jihad is to perform the major pilgrimage." In other words, what A'ishah was requesting permission to do was not to treat the wounded, serve the fighters in various ways, etc, -- all of which is legitimate provided that certain agreed-upon conditions are met -- but rather to take part in combat. As for the conditions which must be met in order for a woman to go out to the battlefield, they are, first of all, that her attire and conduct be in full conformity with Islamic moral standards; and secondly, her going out must be in response to a genuine need. Otherwise, it is not permitted.

What is important to realize here is that the various Islamic precepts are interdependent; in other words,

one may not simply choose those rules which suit one's fancy for particular reasons while ignoring the various other duties and rulings related thereto. It is this type of pick-and-choose attitude which is warned against in the divine word, where we read: "Then do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest? What, then, could be the recompense of those who do so among you except disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment. And God is not unaware of what you do" (Qur'an 2: 85).

Alas, there are some individuals who, when asked for a formal legal opinion, first divest it of whatever restrictions, conditions and responsibilities may have been associated with it, then serve it up to those who requested it on a platter lined with flattery and hypocrisy! Acting on base, worldly motives, such people commit shameful treachery against the religion of God simply in order to satisfy others' whims.

Five: The prohibition against killing women, children, slaves and hired servants when engaged in jihad. This ruling is supported clearly by the hadith in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) saw the woman who had been killed by Khalid Ibn al-Walid. However, an exception to it is made if women, children, slaves, or hired servants are themselves engaged in battle, and if they themselves initiate hostilities against the Muslims; in a case such as this, they may be killed when advancing, but if they retreat, they are to be left alone. Another exception to this ruling is a situation in which the enemy forces use their women and children as a kind of human shield such that disaster for the Muslim side can be averted only by killing them. In any and all such cases, the Muslim leader or caliph must act based on what he sees as the Muslims' best interests.[331]

Six: The ruling on despoliation of those slain in battle. As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) declared at Hunayn that whoever had slain one of the enemy in battle was entitled to whatever articles he found in the slain fighter's possession. Commenting on this, Ibn Sayyid al-Nas states, "Hence, this has become a permanent ruling." This much is agreed upon; however, Muslim scholars disagree as to which type of fixed ruling this is. In other words: In making this declaration, was the Messenger of God (pbuh) delivering a ruling from God Almighty which would not be subject to change under any circumstances, such as the five daily ritual prayers and fasting? Or was he (pbuh) issuing a so-called interest-based judgment, that is, one which he had arrived at in his capacity as the Muslims' Imam based on what he perceived to be in their best interests at the time?

According to al-Shafi'i, may God have mercy on him, it is a ruling of the first type, that is, one which the Prophet (pbuh) delivered from God Almighty and which, for this reason, means that those who fight in God's cause in all ages and generations may take the spoils of the enemies they have slain without there being any need for permission from the Imam or Muslim leader. As for Abu Hanifah and Malik, may they rest in peace, they hold it to be a judicial ruling which is determined exclusively by the Imam. Hence, the permissibility of taking the spoils of those one has killed in a war of jihad must be decided anew in each situation by the person acting as the Muslims' Imam; if he does not give his permission, then what these individual soldiers would have kept for themselves is added to the collective spoils and is subject to whatever rules apply thereto.[332]

Seven: Jihad does not mean hatred for non-Muslims. This is indicated clearly by the incident mentioned above in which, as the Prophet (pbuh) was departing from al-Ta'if with his Companions following their siege of the city, some of them said to him, "O Messenger of God, call down God's curse upon Banu Thaqif!" But instead he (pbuh) said, "O God, guide Thaqif and bring them here!" What this tells us is that jihad is nothing but the action of commanding that which is good and forbidding that which is evil. It is, in essence, all people's responsibility toward one another to deliver themselves and each other from being relegated to eternal torment on the Day of Resurrection. Hence, any prayer which a Muslim prays for a non-Muslim should be for guidance and reform, for this is the wise purpose for which jihad was established in the first place.

Eight: When do Muslim soldiers take possession of the spoils? As we saw above, when the delegation from the tribes of Hawazin came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) declaring themselves Muslims, he (pbuh) said to them, "I deliberately postponed the distribution of the booty in the hope that you would become Muslims." What this tells us is that no matter how much time passes before the Imam or Muslim ruler distributes the spoils of war, Muslim fighters may not take possession of them until after such a distribution has taken place. Otherwise, the Prophet's postponement of the distribution of the booty would have held no benefit for the delegation from Hawazin. In addition, it tells us that unless the Imam has already distributed the spoils of war among the Muslim soldiers, he possesses the right to restore them to their original owners if they come to him as Muslims; as we have seen, it was this latter course of action which the Messenger of God (pbuh) favored. However, since the spoils which have already been apportioned among the Muslims do, in fact, become their possession, the Imam has no right to take back any part thereof unless this is done with the full, freely granted consent of those to whom the property has been distributed.

Consider the painstaking, precise manner in which the Prophet (pbuh) approached the matter of seeking such consent from the owners of the distributed booty. Not content merely to hear their collective cries of, "We approve, O Messenger of God!", he (pbuh) insisted on making certain of their approval by either hearing it voiced by each person individually, or by hearing it from those who were qualified to act as their legitimate representatives. What this means is that the Muslim ruler may not employ his power and authority to force people to waive any of their lawful rights or possessions. On the contrary, the Lawgiver has not granted such power or authority to any leader, including the Apostle (pbuh) himself.

This, then, is genuine justice and equality! As for all those false claims which, bolstered by catchy phrases and slogans, attempt to ride on the coattails of such divinely-inspired ideals and values, let them bury themselves in the sand!

Nine: Islam's policy toward new Muslims whose faith needs to be better established. As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) devoted the lion's share of the spoils (from the Battle of Hunayn) to those who had embraced Islam on the day Mecca was conquered; in so doing, he did not adhere to the original rule of equality among the Muslim fighters. This action on the part of the Prophet (pbuh) is one of the most important pieces of evidence upon which Muslim scholars base the view that, depending on the extent to which such an action serves the interests of the Muslim community, the Imam has the right, and even the duty, to give a larger portion of the wealth available for such purposes -- whether it comes from spoils from a given battle or from some other source -- to those whose faith is not yet fully established. Hence, a special portion of the zakah funds may be set aside for such individuals, with the Muslim ruler being given the prerogative to distribute portions thereof as the need arises based on the Muslims' communal welfare.

Ten: The Helpers' special merit and the Messenger of God's great love for them. Truly did the Prophet (pbuh) speak when he said, "Satan is in human beings' blood." It was Satan who wanted to sow a critical attitude in the hearts of some of the Helpers toward the way in which the Prophet (pbuh) had distributed the booty by suggesting to them that he (pbuh) had acted on the basis of a sentimental attachment to his people of origin and forgotten the Helpers!

When the Prophet (pbuh) was told what the Helpers were thinking, what did he say to them? The address which he (pbuh) delivered to them in response to such suspicions overflowed with tenderness, sensitivity, and profound love. At the same time, it showed clearly how painful it was for him to be accused by those nearest and dearest to him of forgetting and abandoning them. The tender, heartfelt sympathy which he (pbuh) thus expressed moved the Helpers so deeply that their doubts and suspicions were washed away and they wept aloud for joy over their beloved Prophet and the generous portion they had received through him. After all, of what value were she-goats and the spoils of war compared with their beloved, the Messenger of God (pbuh)? It was they who had the privilege of returning home with him to live and die

together. What greater proof could he (pbuh) have given them of his loyalty and the sincerity of his love and affection than to have left his homeland and his place of birth to spend the rest of his days among them?!

Besides, one may ask: When had money ever been a measure of the Prophet's love and appreciation? It is true that he (pbuh) had given the Qurayshites a great deal of wealth and booty. But, did he set aside any of this for himself, or did he make his own portion equal to that of the Helpers? What he (pbuh) did was to take the fifth which God had designated for His Apostle (pbuh) and which he was free to dispose of as he saw fit, and divide it among the Bedouin who had gathered all about him. Think carefully about what he said to them as they begged him to give them more: "O people, believe me when I tell you that I only receive one-fifth of the spoils taken without fighting, and that fifth returns to you!"

May God's blessings be upon you, O Messenger of God, on your righteous Companions, and on the Helpers and the Emigrants. Gather us beneath your glorious standard, and include us among those who will meet you at the Pool on the Day of Resurrection!

The Battle of Tabuk

The cause behind this expedition is that, as we learn from Ibn Sa'd and others, the Muslims learned from the Nabateans who used to travel back and forth between Medina and Syria for trade purposes that the Byzantines had gathered together large forces against them, including fighters from among the Banu Lakhm, Judham, and other Christian Arabs who were under their influence, and that their vanguards had reached al-Balqa' (a region of Syria). Having learned of this development, the Prophet (pbuh) called his people out against the Byzantine army which, according to al-Tabarani based on a hadith on the authority of Ibn Husayn, numbered 40,000 men.[333]

These events took place in the month of Rajab, 9 A.H. It was the summer season, the heat had reached its apex, and people were hard pressed to endure the elements. At the same time, Medina's fruit was at its ripest and most delicious. It was because of this that, contrary to the practice he (pbuh) had adopted prior to other expeditions, the Prophet (pbuh) announced the direction in which the Muslim army would be heading. Ka'b Ibn Malik says, "Before all previous expeditions, the Messenger of God (pbuh) had concealed the matter, speaking of it only in veiled terms and leading others to believe that he was going in a direction other than the one he actually intended. This time, however, they would have to set out in severe heat, travel long distances through desolate wilderness, and encounter large numbers of the enemy. Consequently, he (pbuh) spoke clearly to the Muslims about what lay ahead in order for them to prepare themselves properly."[334]

And thus it was that the journey involved in this expedition, which would undoubtedly subject those who went forth to battle to the most merciless tribulation and testing, lay heavily upon people's hearts. This being the case, the insincerity of the hypocrites began revealing itself here and there, while the genuineness of those with true faith likewise started coming to full expression. Some of the hypocrites began saying to each other, "Do not march out to war in the heat...!" Then one day, a certain hypocrite[335] came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and said, "Grant me permission (to remain at home), and do not put me to too hard a test! Believe me, my people know well what a weakness I have for women, and I fear that if I saw the women of Banu al-Asfar, I would not be able to contain myself." As for the Prophet (pbuh), he turned away from the man and granted his petition.[336] Meanwhile, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salul encamped in an outlying area of Medina with certain groups of his companions, but when the Prophet (pbuh) set out, he and all those with him stayed behind!

In the context of these events, God Almighty revealed the words, "Those (hypocrites) who stayed behind rejoiced in their staying behind God's Apostle, for they hated to strive and fight with their properties and their lives in God's cause; and they (even) said (to the others), 'Do not march forth to war in this heat!' Say: 'The fire of Hell is more intense', if only they could understand" (Qur'an 9: 81) and, "And among them is he who says, 'Grant me permission (to remain at home), and do not put me into trial!' Surely, (by making such a request) they have fallen into trial. And, verily, Hell is surrounding the disbelievers" (Qur'an 9: 49).

As for the true believers, however, they flocked to the Prophet (pbuh) from all over. Responding to the request that those possessed of material wealth help to provide the needed riding animals, many of them

came laden with all the money and equipment they could muster. 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, may God be pleased with him, brought 300 camels with their saddles and blankets,[337] as well as 1,000 dinars which he spread out on his lap. In response, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Nothing 'Uthman does from this day onward will cause him any harm."[338]

Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, brought all the money he owned, and 'Umar brought half of all his wealth. In this connection, al-Tirmidhi narrates the following account on the authority of Zayd Ibn Aslam, on the authority of his father, who said,

I heard 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab saying: The Messenger of God (pbuh) commanded us to give alms, and it so happened that I had money to give. So I said to myself: If I've ever managed to outdo Abu Bakr, I'll outdo him today!

Then I took half of all my wealth to the Messenger of God (pbuh), and he asked me, "What have you kept for your family?"

"The same amount as I've given you," I replied.

Then Abu Bakr came forward with everything he had.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) asked him, "What have you kept for your family?"

"What I've kept for them is God and His Apostle," he replied.

And I said: I can never outdo him in anything![339]

At around the same time, the Prophet (pbuh) was approached by a group of Muslim men who came to be called "the Weepers." They came asking the Messenger of God (pbuh) for mounts to ride so that they could go out to engage in jihad with him (pbuh). However, he replied, "I have nothing on which to mount you." So they turned back, their eyes filled with tears of grief because they lacked the material means to take part in the expedition.

When the Prophet (pbuh) set out, he was accompanied by approximately 30,000 Muslim fighters,[340] while a number of Muslim men whose faith and sincerity – as we are told by Ibn Ishaq - were unquestionable, stayed back, including Ka'b Ibn Malik, Murarah Ibn al-Rabi', Hilal Ibn Umayyah, and Abu Khaythamah. However, Abu Khaythamah set out later and caught up with the Prophet (pbuh) after he had reached Tabuk.[341]

Al-Tabarani, Ibn Ishaq, and al-Waqidi narrate that several days after the Prophet (pbuh) had departed, Abu Khaythamah went home to his family. It was a hot day, and when he arrived, he found two of his wives in two tents in a garden of his. Each of the women had sprinkled her tent, cooled some water for him, and prepared food for him to eat. As he entered one of the tents, he stopped at the door and looked at his two wives and what they had done for him. Then he said, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) is out in the hot sun and wind, while Abu Khaythamah is here in the cool shade with food prepared for him and a beautiful woman ready to do his bidding! It isn't fair, I tell you! I swear to God, I will not come in to be with either of you until I have caught up with the Messenger of God!"

So the two women prepared food for his journey. Then he brought forth a water camel,[342] saddled it up, and set off for Tabuk in search of the Messenger of God (pbuh). As Abu Khaythamah drew near to where the Muslims were encamped, they said, "There is a rider approaching, O Messenger of God!"

"Let it be Abu Khaythamah!" he (pbuh) replied.

"O Messenger of God," they said, "it is!"

When he had made his camel kneel down, he came up to the Messenger of God (pbuh), who said, "This is what I would have expected of you, Abu Khaythamah!"

Then Abu Khaythamah told the Prophet (pbuh) what had happened, and he (pbuh) prayed for blessings on him.

However, this expedition involved strenuous effort and physical exhaustion for the Muslims. According to an account narrated by Imam Ahmad and others, they had so few mounts that two and three men had to take turns riding a single camel, and they were afflicted with such severe thirst that they began slaughtering their camels in order to open up their bellies and drink the water stored inside.[343]

Imam Ahmad relates the following account in his Musnad on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, who says,

During the expedition to Tabuk, the Muslims suffered such severe hunger that they said to the Prophet (pbuh), "O Messenger of God, will you give us permission to slaughter our water camels? If we did so, we could eat and benefit from their fat."

"You may do so," replied the Messenger of God (pbuh).

However, 'Umar stepped forward and said,"O Messenger of God, if they do this, we will have even fewer animals to ride. Instead, why don't you call upon the people to bring forth whatever they have left of the food supplies they brought for the journey, then pray for blessing upon them? In this way, perhaps God will bring us relief."

In response, the Prophet (pbuh) called for a leather mat and spread it out on the ground. Then he called on the people to bring him whatever they had left of their food provisions. One man brought a handful of corn, another a handful of dates, another a few chunks of bread, and so on until a modest collection of items had been formed on the mat. After praying for God's blessing on the food before him, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Come and put food in whatever bags or pouches you have with you."

So they began filling their various containers with the food, and they kept on filling them until not a single one was left in the entire camp. Then they ate until they were satisfied, and still had food left over.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then said, "I bear witness that there is no deity besides God, and that I am His Messenger. No one who meets God with these two confessions on his lips and in his heart will be turned away from Paradise."[344]

When the Muslim forces reached Tabuk, they found neither intrigue nor combat; instead, those who had gathered to wage war against them had scattered and vanished. However, they were approached by a man by the name of Yuhannah, the ruler of Aylah, who concluded a peace agreement with the Messenger of God (pbuh) and consented to pay the jizyah.[345] The Prophet (pbuh) was also approached by the people of Jarba' and Adhruh, two villages in Syria, who likewise paid him the jizyah, and he (pbuh) provided them with a written agreement to this effect.

While on their way, the Muslim army passed through al-Hijr, which is where the people of Thamud are known to have lived.[346] Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) told his Companions, "Unless you do so with tears in your eyes, do not enter the dwelling places of those who wronged themselves lest you be doomed to the same fate that they were." Then he wrapped his head so as to veil his face and quickened his pace until he had reached the other side of the valley.[347]

The Prophet (pbuh) then set out for home. When he and his men were on the outskirts of Medina, he (pbuh) said to his Companions, "Here is Tabah, and here is Uhud, a mountain which loves us, and which

we love."[348]

He (pbuh) also told them, "In the city of Medina there are people who, wherever you march and whatever valleys you may traverse, remain with you."

"O Messenger of God, do you mean that they were with us even though they were still in Medina?"

"Yes," he (pbuh) replied, "they were kept back by valid excuses."[349]

The Prophet (pbuh) returned from Tabuk to Medina in Ramadan of the same year, having been away for approximately two months.

The Matter of Those Who Refrained from Going Out to Battle

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) entered Medina, he went first to the mosque, where he performed two cycles of prayer. Then he sat down and began meeting with people who had come to see him (pbuh). Among these were approximately eighty men who had stayed behind rather than going out to battle, and who came to him making excuses for themselves and swearing to him concerning their good intentions and the like. Accepting their words at face value, the Prophet (pbuh) postponed making a judgement on the cases of Ka'b Ibn Malik and his two companions until Qur'anic verses were revealed indicating that he (pbuh) was to accept their repentance.

In a long hadith narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari, Ka'b, may God be pleased with him, relates the following account of his experience. He states:

At the time of this particular expedition, there wasn't a man in the world stronger or in easier circumstances than I was. So I began preparing myself for the journey along with the Muslims. But then I hesitated and did nothing. I said to myself, "There's nothing to prevent me from getting ready as fast as everyone else!" But then my hesitation got the better of me again. Meanwhile, everyone else was earnestly engaged in getting themselves ready, whereas I had still done nothing. Things went on this way until they were gone and it was too late to go with them. I nearly saddled up and overtook them – and how I wish I had! – but I seemed destined not to.

After the Messenger of God (pbuh) had departed, I found that whenever I went out among people, it grieved me to see that the only other people who had stayed back were either out-and-out hypocrites, or so weak that God had exempted them from the duty to fight. When I learned that he (pbuh) was on his way home, I got terribly worried and I started thinking of lies I could tell to get myself out of my predicament. But I thought, how will I ever escape his indignation?! I sought out help and counsel from everyone in my family whose opinion I trusted. But when it was said that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had arrived, falsehood lost its hold on me and I made up my mind to tell him the truth.

I came to see him (pbuh), and when I greeted him, he smiled at me angrily and said, "Come here."

So I came forward and sat down before him (pbuh), then he said to me, "What kept you from coming with us? Hadn't you bought a mount for yourself?"

"Indeed, I had," I replied. "I swear to God, if I sat with anyone else on earth besides you, I would be able to avert his anger by means of an excuse. And I thought of making excuses. But I know that if I spoke to you untruthfully today and gained your favor in this way, God himself would intervene to incite your wrath against me. On the other hand, if I tell you the truth and thereby incur your disfavor, I have reason to hope for God's forgiveness. I swear to God, I have no excuse. In fact, when I failed to go out to battle, there wasn't a man in the world stronger or more at ease than I was!"

The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "This man has spoken the truth. Rise, and wait for God's judgment concerning you to be revealed."

So I got up. However, some men of the tribe of Banu Salamah came after me and began upbraiding me.

So I asked them, "Is there anyone else in the same situation as I am?"

"Yes," they replied, "two men who said the same thing you did, and who were told the same thing you were told."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"Murarah Ibn al-Rabi' and Hilal Ibn Umayyah."

It so happened that the two men whose names they had mentioned were righteous men who had fought in the Battle of Badr, and who had been inspiring examples to me.

In any case, the Messenger of God (pbuh) forbade the other Muslims to speak to the three of us, whereas he did not do so in the cases of the other men who had not gone out to battle. Hence, people avoided our company, and I felt so alienated, it was as though I were a complete stranger in my own homeland. Things went on like this for fifty days.

My two friends, resigning themselves to the situation, retired to their homes and wept. As for me, though, I was the hardiest, most youthful man of my tribe, so I used to go out and attend the prayers with the Muslims and make the rounds of the marketplaces without anyone saying a word to me. I used to come to see the Messenger of God (pbuh) and greet him as he sat receiving people following prayer. Then I would wonder to myself, did he (pbuh) move his lips to return my greeting, or not? I used to pray near him, stealing glances at him the entire time. When I was performing my own prayer, he would move closer to me, but if I glanced in his direction, he would look away.

Then one day as I was walking through Medina, one of the Nabateans of Syria who used to come and sell food in the city said, "Who of you can lead me to Ka'b Ibn Malik?"

The people began pointing in my direction and when he came up to me, he handed me a letter from the king of the Ghassanids which read as follows: "I have received reports to the effect that your friend has treated you inhospitably. God has not put you in a place where you must suffer ruin or humiliation. So join us, and we will support you."

When I read the letter, I said, "This, too, is a trial to be endured."

Then I headed toward the oven, fired it up, and let the letter burn.

When forty out of the fifty days had passed, a courier from the Messenger of God (pbuh) came to me and said, "The Messenger of God commands you to stay away from your wife."

I asked, "Does this mean I am to divorce her? What exactly am I to do?"

"Simply withdraw from her, and do not touch her."

He (pbuh) sent the same message to my two companions as well.

So I said to my wife, "Go stay with your family until God issues a verdict on this matter."

Then ten more days and nights went by, until a total of fifty days had passed since the Messenger of God (pbuh) had forbidden others to speak to us.

On the morning of the fiftieth day, I was praying the dawn prayer on a rooftop. As I sat there in the state which God mentions in the holy revelation[350] -my soul being in such dire distress, it was as if the earth, vast as it is, were too narrow to contain me – I heard someone shouting at the top of his lungs from Mt. Sal', "O Ka'b Ibn Malik, be of good cheer!"

Then I fell prostrate in worship, knowing that relief had come at last.

And in fact, when the Messenger of God (pbuh) prayed the dawn prayer, he had announced God's turning toward us in His mercy. After this, people began coming to me and my two companions with the happy news. When the man whose voice I had heard came to see me, I removed the two robes I was wearing and placed them on him. The fact is, they were the only two robes I owned at the time, so I borrowed two

others and set out to see the Messenger of God (pbuh).

Meanwhile, people began coming to me in throngs, congratulating me on the mercy I had received from God. When I went into the mosque, I found people seated around the Messenger of God (pbuh), but Talhah Ibn 'Ubayd Allah got up, rushed over to me, shook my hand and congratulated me. He is the only Emigrant who rose to greet me, and I will never forget this kindness on Talhah's part as long as I live.

When I greeted the Messenger of God (pbuh), his face was radiant with joy as he said, "Rejoice in the most blessed day you have lived since your mother bore you."

Then I asked him (pbuh), "Did this decision come from you, O Messenger of God, or from God himself?"

"It was from God himself," he (pbuh) replied.

"O Messenger of God!" I said, "As a sign of my repentance, I want to give all my wealth in alms to God and His Apostle."

"But it would be better for you to keep some for yourself, "he (pbuh) said.

"O Messenger of God, it was truthfulness which delivered me, and as a further expression of my repentance, I will never speak anything but the truth as long as I live."

It was then that God revealed the verses in which He says, "Indeed, God has forgiven the Prophet, Muslim emigrants (who left their homes and came to Medina) and the Muslim Helpers (of Medina) who followed him in the time of distress (Tabuk expedition etc.), after the hearts of a party of them had already deviated (from the Right Path), but He accepted their repentance for, behold, He is compassionate towards them, a dispenser of grace. And (He did forgive also) the three (who did not join the Tabuk expedition) left (i.e. He did not give His judgment in their case that He has suspended) till for them the earth, vast as it is, was straitened and their own selves were straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from God, and no refuge but with Him. Then He accepted their repentance, that they might repent (unto Him); verily, God is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful. O you who believe! Be afraid of God and be with those who are true (in words and deeds)" (Qur'an 9: 117-119).[351]

Lessons and Principles

Before discussing the lessons to be derived from this expedition, allow me to offer the following parenthetical remarks. As Islam began to take root on the Arabian Peninsula and in the hearts and souls of its inhabitants, the Christians of Byzantium looked on from afar with apprehension and concern. For the Byzantines had not embraced Christianity out of genuine faith in its teachings; rather, they had adopted it as a pretext on the basis of which they could colonize the peoples of the region. Consequently, they had had no compunctions about manipulating it however they wished, changing and modifying it, mixing the divine guidance therein with their pagan ways, and adding falsehood to its truth.

As for Islam, the religion whose message had been repeated on the lips of all God's messengers and prophets, it had come to free people such that thenceforth they could live under the power, sovereignty and rule of God alone. Being familiar with all the facts of Christianity, the Byzantines, of all people, would have been the most capable of realizing the seriousness of the message of Islam and the threat which it represented to the rule of tyrants, the authority of those possessed of worldly power, and the dominion of malefactors. It is no wonder, then, that once this religion had become established on the Arabian Peninsula, it became a source of anxiety and dread on the part of Byzantium's oppressors and their followers, who only had embraced Christianity outwardly, and whose only intention in so doing so had been to ensure their ability to impose control over those they deemed to be weak and defenseless. Alarmed by the news of the conquest of Mecca and Islam's victory on the Arabian Peninsula, the Byzantines began amassing their forces between Syria and the Hijaz in the hope of staying the progress of this religion whose

spread would put an end to them and their dominion.

Given this concern of the Byzantines, one would have expected the armed confrontation between them and the Muslims to be of the greatest magnitude. However, the wisdom of God decreed that the Muslims' jihad on this expedition be limited to the tremendous effort they expended and the physical hardships they endured as they traversed the vast distance between Medina and Tabuk. As we have seen, it was an extraordinary journey which entailed extreme affliction and adversity. And what is the jihad which God commands us to undertake, if not the spending of ourselves and the exertion of the utmost effort for the sake of God's precepts and religion? This is all God asks of His servants, and God forbid that He should stand in need of our assistance in order to thwart the machinations of those who deny the truth or cause the meaning of true guidance and faith to penetrate the hearts of the ungrateful.

On this difficult, exhausting campaign, the Muslim army spent both their wealth and their inward resources, sacrificing comfort and ease at the very time when they were most alluring and, in their stead, braving the harshest forms of affliction and distress. In so doing, they demonstrated the sincerity of their faith in God and their love for Him; they were thus worthy to be granted relief and victory, and to be spared the additional hardship of combat itself by means of the terror which God Himself struck in the hearts of their foes, thereby causing them to scatter in disarray, then submit themselves to God's rule over them.

Hence, the readiness with which Byzantium surrendered itself to the poll tax and its relevant restrictions was in direct proportion to the difficulty which had been endured by the Muslims with their Apostle (pbuh) in pursuit of the good pleasure of their Lord, may His majesty be exalted.

As for the many lessons and principles to be derived from this expedition, we may summarize them as follows:

One: The importance of engaging in jihad with one's material wealth. The struggle against the enemies of Islam is not restricted to going out to battle, nor will it suffice to go to war and nothing else. Rather, whenever the command to engage in jihad by means of armed conflict involves monetary expense, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to offer enough of their own resources to meet the need at hand, each one contributing in proportion to the wealth which he or she possesses.

Muslim jurisprudents have ruled that if the state is obliged to raise funds to meet the expenses entailed by armed jihad, it may impose this expense on its subjects in the form which we have mentioned. However, such scholars agree that this is only a legitimate measure if state funds are not being used to purchase luxuries or for other illegitimate purposes, since it is the state's funds, and not those belonging to its subjects, which should be spent first to meet the needs of military personnel and the requirements of combat.

We have seen how 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, may God be pleased with him, came to the Prophet (pbuh) with three hundred camels, including all the saddles and blankets they would need, as well as approximately two hundred uqiyahs[352] of silver. In response, the Prophet declared, "Nothing 'Uthman does from this day onward can cause him any harm." In addition to being an affirmation of 'Uthman's virtue and merit, these words serve as a denunciation of all those who wish to speak evil of 'Uthman, including those who take boastful pride in their criticisms of the policies which he pursued during his caliphate. Waxing prolix on the subject of what they describe as an appearance of "weakness" or "prejudice" in his policies, such writers follow in the footsteps of the Orientalists who take pleasure in slinging mud at Islamic history, as it were, thereby seeking to achieve a well-known, premeditated aim by means of lies and deception.

Those who situate themselves in lofty towers of alleged impartiality, thence to utter their verdicts on 'Uthman and his policies, need first to become aware of their own infirmities. Then, having realized their own illnesses, they should study some of the feats accomplished by this great Caliph and allow themselves to be guided by the example embodied in his life and conduct. Besides, even if we set aside all evaluations of 'Uthman's caliphate, the question remains: Who of us is so devoid of etiquette that he can hear the words of God's Messenger, "Nothing 'Uthman does from this day onward can cause him any harm," then go on disparaging 'Uthman and his policies as if it were his favorite sport?

Two: A word on the hadith concerning Abu Bakr and the additions to it which some have fabricated in order to justify a particular heretical practice. As we have seen based on the hadith about Abu Bakr related by Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi, Abu Bakr brought all of his wealth to the Prophet (pbuh). Then, when the Prophet (pbuh) asked him, "What have you kept for your family?" he replied, "I have kept God and His Apostle."

An addition to this hadith has been fabricated according to which the Prophet (pbuh) then said to Abu Bakr, "O Abu Bakr, God is pleased with you. Are you pleased with Him?" In response, Abu Bakr was so filled with rapture, he got up and danced before the Messenger of God (pbuh), saying, "How could I not be pleased with God?!" Having concocted this addition, its originators then turned it into evidence in support of the legitimacy of dancing and whirling in the dhikr ceremonies for which the Mevlevis and other Sufi sects are known.

As I have mentioned, the evidence upon which this practice is based is a fabrication. There is no hadith, be it sound or weak, which mentions that Abu Bakr got up and danced before the Messenger of God (pbuh). Rather, all we have by way of texts on this subject is the hadith related by al-Tirmidhi, al-Hakim, and Abu Dawud which, as I noted in my earlier discussion of it, contains possible weaknesses.

As for the conclusion which some Sufis draw based on this fabrication, it must be said that not only is there no support for it, but there is positive evidence against it. Specifically, it is held by the majority of Muslim jurisprudents that when dancing involves bending and swaying back and forth, it is prohibited, and that when it does not involve such movements, it is still undesirable. Hence, to introduce dance – of whatever sort it happens to be -- into ceremonies devoted to the remembrance of God is to interpolate into Muslim workship a practice which is, if not utterly banned, at the very least undesirable.

Add to this the fact that the state into which these "worshippers" enter leads them to utter sounds which have nothing to do with the words employed in the remembrance of God. Rather, they are nothing but inarticulate utterances by means of which they produce a steady drone that harmonizes with the rhythms of those chanting and singing and increases the mood of ecstatic exhilaration. How can this be the type of remembrance which God has commanded us to engage in, and which was practiced by the Apostle (pbuh) and his Companions?! How can an activity such as this be worship, when worship – as you are well aware – is what God has legislated for us in the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, neither of which is to be added to or detracted from?

Rest assured that what we are saying is in accordance with the view which has been held by scholars of Islamic law across the ages, with none disagreeing except for a small minority of dissenters who have established practices for which God has not granted permission. As for the latter, countless are the forbidden acts which they have deemed lawful and the mortal sins which they have committed, at times in the name of ecstatic transport inspired by the love of God, and at other times in the name of liberation from the "noose" of religious obligations.

The following is a quotation on this subject from al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd al-Salam, one of the most highly esteemed

Muslim leaders and teachers, known and respected for his uprightness, knowledge, piety and Sufi way of life. He states,

As for dancing and applause, these are acts of thoughtlessness and frivolity the likes of which one generally sees only in girls. No one but the lightheaded or the charlatan would engage in such practices. Why, then, do we see dancing to the rhythm of song by those whose hearts and minds have grown heedless and fickle, even though he (pbuh) has said, "The most virtuous of all generations is my own, followed by those who succeed us, followed by those who succeed them," and even though not a single member of the righteous generations which we are to emulate engaged in such things?[353]

The same thoughts are expressed by Ibn Hajar in his book, Kaff al-Ra'a' 'an Muharramat al-Lahu wa-al-Sama' ("Preventing the Masses from Engaging in Forbidden Acts of Frivolity and Listening"), and by Ibn Abidin in his well-known, widely recognized commentary, where he distinguishes between a genuine, overwhelming experience of ecstatic transport, and a bogus show of the same.

As for Imam al-Qurtubi, he goes into even greater detail in warning against this dangerous innovation and the reasons for the prohibition against it; those who wish to read what he says on this matter may refer to his Qur'anic commentary on the following verses: "...and who remember God when they stand, and when they sit, and when they lie down to sleep..." (Qur'an 3: 191) and, "And do not walk upon earth exultantly. Indeed, you will never tear the earth (apart), and you will never reach the mountains in height" (Qur'an 17: 37). Were it not for the fact that it would lead to prolixity on a topic that requires brevity, I would set forth the views expressed on this matter by many other Imams as well. Be that as it may, the position I have expounded here is virtually uncontested, being agreed upon by the vast majority of Muslim scholars, both ancient and contemporary.[354]

It is clear, of course, that the prohibition of dancing being discussed here could not be applied to someone who, while engaged in the remembrance of God, entered a spiritual state in which he was no longer in control of all his feelings or actions. For when a person is a state such as this, binding judgements such as the one under discussion cease to apply. This fact must be born in mind when considering statements to the effect that al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd al-Salam himself once went into a frenzy and got up and began jumping about. After all, given that he held the view which we quoted above, how could he have engaged in such behavior of his own volition?[355]

Three: Hypocrites – their nature and the danger they pose to Islam. The Qur'an devotes more space to the discussion of and commentary upon the Expedition of Tabuk than any other battle or expedition; Chapter 9, entitled, "Repentance" contains numerous verses, and even entire pages, on this subject. The focus in most of these passages is on the importance of engaging in jihad for God's sake with one's money and one's very life, since this is the sole proof of the genuineness of the Muslim's faith and the most important means of distinguishing between believers and hypocrites. Those Muslims whose faith is genuine must not remain passive and relaxed at times when jihad is called for; rather, they must go forth in courage, making light of whatever hardship they have to endure for God's sake. In addition, the Qur'an speaks at length about the hypocrites, exposing their ulterior motives and aims.

As for the lesson offered here, it has to do with the danger posed by hypocrisy and hypocrites to Muslims in all times and places. Islam is a message which must be made credible by Muslims' willingness to engage in jihad and to endure trials for their faith. Only in this way will it be possible to distinguish between the genuine and the bogus, and between the faith of true believers and the faithlessness of hypocrites. The expedition to Tabuk provided perfect material for this Qur'anic lesson, since the tests to which it exposed the Muslims served as a divine laser beam as it were, laying bare the hypocrisy that existed in Medina and drawing a clear line between the hypocrites and the genuine believers. There then descended successive

Qur'anic verses which made the Muslims aware of the hypocrites' crimes and secret intentions and warned them of the harm which they could cause them in virtually all places and all generations.

We read the following concerning the Tabuk expedition in the divine revelation: "Those (hypocrites), who remained behind, rejoiced in their staying (at home) after (the departure of) the Messenger of God and disliked to strive with their wealth and their lives in the Cause of God; and they had (even) said, 'Do not march in the heat!' Say: 'The fire of Hell is more intense!' if only they could understand! So let them laugh a little and (they will) cry much as a recompense of what they used to earn. (O Prophet,) if God brings you back to a party of them, and they ask your permission to go out (to fight), say: 'You will never go out with me, and you will never fight with me an enemy! Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting (at home) the first time: so sit (now) with those who (are obliged to) stay behind!'" (Qur'an 9: 81-83)

If you examine the verses which precede and follow this passage, you will note an exceptional concern with the topic of the hypocrites and warnings against them. The reason for this is that in most of the misfortunes that afflict Muslims, they can only be affected by the hypocrites among them; for in general, none of their enemies can infiltrate them unless it is through the breaches in their psychological defenses made possible by the presence of hypocrites and hypocrisy in their midst. Needless to say, they will not be as easily deceived by an enemy as they will by a hypocrite, nor will anyone but a hypocrite be as successful in afflicting them with weakness, confusion, and disunity. Truly did God speak when He said of them, "Had they (hypocrites) marched out with you, they would not have increased you except in confusion, and they would have been active among you seeking to cause you fitnah (i.e. chaos and dissension). And there are some among you who are avid listeners to them. And God is the All-Knower of the wrongdoers" (Qur'an 9: 47).

The danger hypocrites pose to the Muslim community lies in the fact that they wage war against Islam in the name of Islam: plotting evil against it using its own weapons and tampering with its precepts in the name of reform, flexibility, and the importance of clinging to the spirit of the law; in so doing, they come out with contrived, sham legal rulings as a means of fulfilling their own wishes and ingratiating themselves with their benefactors and those in power over them. The moral offered here to the Muslim community is that whatever precautions they take against their external enemies, they should take double precautions against the hypocrites among them; the most important thing for them to combat is the hypocrisy that creeps into their midst.

Four: The poll tax and the People of the Book. This expedition provides evidence in support of the legitimacy of the imposition of the poll tax, or jizyah, on Jews and Christians, and indicates that by this means, they spare their own lives and property. As we have seen, the Byzantines had scattered and vanished by the time the Messenger of God (pbuh) reached Tabuk. Following this, he (pbuh) was approached by the Christian Arabs, for whom he (pbuh) drew up a written peace treaty in accordance with which they would pay the poll tax to the Muslim ruler.

As has been mentioned before, the jizyah is a tax which is to the Christians and Jews what the zakah is to the Muslims, the difference between them being that the jizyah rests on a purely judicial foundation, whereas the legitimacy of the zakah rests on both a religious and a judicial basis. Those who are obliged to pay the jizyah are subject to the judicial rule of Islam within Islamic society even if they do not subscribe to the tenets of Islam. Hence, they are not openly to oppose any of its public laws or ordinances except with respect to points on which they claim that their religious beliefs give them reason to comport themselves differently from Muslims, for example, on the matter of drinking alcoholic beverages.

In addition, there is a difference to be noted between the People of the Book and other non-Muslims, such as atheists and idol-worshippers, with respect to the jizyah, namely, that People of the Book are capable of living in harmony with the Islamic community and its public system even as they hold on to their own

religious beliefs. With respect to atheists and idol-worshippers, however, they share too little in common with Islamic society to guarantee such harmony. The reason for this is that the notions of atheism and paganism are at odds with the principles of Islamic rule in virtually all spheres of life due to the deeply rooted mutual distrust and animosity which exist between the two sides.

Five: The words spoken by the Messenger of God (pbuh) as he passed by the former dwellings of the tribe of Thamud are evidence that it is undesirable for a Muslim to enter the territories of bygone peoples who were destroyed by God for their unbelief, or even to pass by their ruins, without being mindful of the fate which these people met and seeking God's mercy both for himself and all other Muslims. Such places once witnessed a manifestation of God's wrath, the lasting traces of which are still evident in their ruins. As God makes clear in numerous verses of the holy Qur'an, He has allowed these ruins to remain on earth in order to be lessons for those with eyes to see and hearts to understand. Hence, it is a serious mistake to pass by them without giving thought to their significance, with interest in nothing but their outward forms, structures, and inscriptions.

The earth is filled with lessons and morals of this type which continue to resound in the ears of those who see them, inviting those with discerning hearts to heed their silent message. However, people listen to nothing but the thoughts being whispered to them by their own inner voices; hence, the only things which capture their interest are expressions of art and objects of archeological and historical value!

Six: Let us now reflect on the difference between the Prophet's policy toward the hypocrites and his manner of dealing with his believing Companions. As we have seen, a large number of the hypocrites stayed back from this expedition; then, when it was over, they came to the Messenger of God (pbuh) with all manner of excuses. Nevertheless, he pardoned them and accepted their excuses at face value, leaving the matter of what their real reasons were to God Almighty. By contrast, a small number of believers stayed behind without there being any hypocrisy in their motives; then, upon the Prophet's return, they came asking for his pardon and forgiveness without lying or making excuses for themselves. Nevertheless, he (pbuh) did not pardon them at first; rather, he punished them. And as we have seen, the punishment which he (pbuh) inflicted on them was a harsh one, indeed!

Why, then, did the Messenger of God (pbuh) go the way of lenience and pardon with the hypocrites, only to meet the genuine Muslim believers with severity and chastisement? The answer to this question is that in this particular situation, severity and chastisement were, in fact, expressions of honor and respect, which was precisely what the hypocrites did not deserve. After all, how could the hypocrites have deserved to be graced with verses from the holy Qur'an declaring that God had accepted their repentance and turned toward them in mercy?

Besides, the hypocrites have been doomed in any case to the fate of those who stubbornly deny the truth. None of the pretending in which they engage in this life will do a thing to rescue them from the deepest torment which hell fire has to offer on the Day of Resurrection. The Lawgiver has commanded us to leave them to their own devices, issuing judgments upon them in this world based on what they claim to be. What point is there, then, in seeking to discover the reality behind their excuses and their words, or in punishing them for their lies and deceit, when all we are doing is dealing with them on the most superficial level just as they do with us by creating a mere appearance of sincerity and belief? As Ibn al-Qayyim notes,

This is the manner in which the Lord Almighty deals with His servants when it comes to punishment for their trespasses: In his kindness and generosity toward those believing servants who love Him, He chastises them for the slightest infraction or oversight in order to keep them vigilant and alert. As for those who have fallen from His grace by caring nothing for all He has given them, He gives them free rein to disobey

Him as they please, and whenever they commit a sin, He gives them another blessing.[356]

Further lessons and principles of importance are to be found in the lengthy hadith which we quoted above concerning Ka'b Ibn Malik, and these we summarize as follows:

One: The legitimacy of ostracism for religious purposes. As we saw above, the Prophet (pbuh) forbade the Muslims to speak to Ka'b and his two companions for a significant period of time. Commenting on this, Ibn al-Qayyim says, "This indicates also that one is not duty-bound to return the greeting of someone who (has been deemed to be) worthy of ostracism."[357] As Ka'b states in this hadith, "I used to attend the prayers...and I used to come to see the Messenger of God (pbuh) and greet him as he sat receiving people following prayer. Then I would wonder to myself, Did he (pbuh) move his lips to return my greeting, or not?" If it had been his (pbuh) duty to return Ka'b's greeting of peace, it would likewise have been his duty to make himself heard.

Two: Another test to which God subjected Ka'b, may God be pleased with him, is worthy of our consideration, since it exemplifies the kind of faith which a Muslim ought to have in his Lord, may His majesty be exalted. As we have seen, the king of the Ghassanids sent Ka'b a letter in which he conveyed to him his most profound respect, inviting him to abandon those who had hurt him and turned their backs on him and to come to Ghassanid territory, where he would enjoy esteem and happiness. It so happened that when this letter reached him, Ka'b had suffered nearly all he could endure. However, this trial only revealed more of his faith in his Lord, the intensity of his devotion to Him, and the power of his love for Him.

Many, indeed, are the feet which have slipped, and which continue to do so today, in the face of this type of temptation. Nevertheless, Ka'b, unfazed by the Ghassanid king's letter, passed the test with flying colors thanks to his unqualified surrender to his Lord.

Three: Prostrating as an expression of thanks to God is a legitimate form of worship, as evidenced by Ka'b's prostrating when he heard the voice of the herald announcing God's acceptance of his repentance. As Ibn al-Qayyim notes, "Abu Bakr the Righteous prostrated himself before God when he received news that Musaylimah the Liar[358] had been slain; 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib prostrated himself when he found Dhu al-Thudayyah slain among the Kharijites; and the Messenger of God (pbuh) likewise bowed down in worship when the Archangel Gabriel announced to him that every time someone prays for God's blessings upon him (pbuh), God will bless the one who thus prayed ten times over."[359]

Four: According to all but a few of those who adhere to the Hanifi school, a person who vows to give all his wealth as charity is only obliged to give away those forms of his wealth upon which he would have to pay zakah. Those who hold this view have evidence to support it, including the fact that when Ka'b stated, "As a sign of my repentance, I want to give all my wealth in alms to God and His Apostle," the Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Keep some of your wealth for yourself."

As for those who hold that when a person vows to give all his wealth away in alms, he is obliged to give away all of it, they say that Ka'b's statement to the Messenger of God (pbuh) was not, in reality, worded in the way a vow would have been; rather, he was simply seeking the Prophet's counsel on this matter, and the latter's reply to him was that it would be sufficient for him to give away just part of his wealth.[360] Perhaps this is the most accurate interpretation of what Ka'b said and the Messenger of God's response to him.

Abu Bakr's Performance of the Major Pilgrimage in 9 A.H.

When the Prophet (pbuh) returned from Tabuk, he wanted to perform the major pilgrimage. However, he said, "The idolaters come and circumambulate the Ka'bah naked, and I do not want to perform the pilgrimage again until this situation has come to an end." Hence, he (pbuh) sent Abu Bakr, followed by 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with them, to Mecca to forbid the idolaters to perform the pilgrimage in future years and to give them a grace period of four months to enter Islam. Once this period had elapsed, the only alternative to their entry into Islam would be war with the Muslims.

Al-Bukhari narrates in his section entitled, "Battles and Expeditions" on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that before the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him, was sent out on the Feast of Sacrifice with a group of men over which he had been placed in command. The purpose of their journey was to perform the major pilgrimage and to announce to people in Mecca that from that year onwards, no idolater would be allowed to perform the pilgrimage or to circumambulate the Ka'bah unclothed.

According to narratives handed down by Muhammad Ibn Ka'b al-Quraéi and others, the Prophet (pbuh) appointed Abu Bakr commander and overseer of the pilgrimage season in the year 9 A.H., and he (pbuh) sent 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Mecca with thirty or forty verses of Chapter 9 of the Qur'an, entitled, "Repentance." When he reached Mecca, 'Ali recited the verses to the people in their homes on the Day of 'Arafah (the 9th day of Dhu al-Hijjah), giving the idolaters a grace period of four months in which they were free to roam the earth as they pleased. The grace period included the last twenty days of Dhu al-Hijjah, the months of al-Muharram, Safar, and Rabi' I, and ten days of the month of Rabi' II. As for the message 'Ali was to deliver, it was the announcement that, "From this year onward, no idolater shall perform the pilgrimage, nor shall he circumambulate the Ka'bah naked."

Imam Ahmad narrates the following account on the authority of Muhriz Ibn Abi Hurayrah, on the authority of his father, who said,

I was with 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib when the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent him to the people of Mecca with Chapter 9 of the Qur'an, "Repentance." When we arrived, we made the following proclamations: That no one but the believing soul will enter Paradise; that no one shall circumambulate the Ka'bah unclothed; that whoever has entered into a covenant with the Prophet (pbuh) has four months in which to fulfill its terms and that if these four months elapse without their fulfilling their pledges, God will disavow all who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him and so will His Apostle; moreover, no idolater is to perform the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah from this year onward." I kept crying out these proclamations until I grew hoarse.

This, then, is the meaning of the words, "And a declaration from God and His Messenger to mankind on the day of the Greatest Pilgrimage that God is disassociated from the disbelievers, and (so is) His Messenger. So, if you repent, it shall be for your own good; but if you turn away, then know that you can never escape (from the punishment of) God. And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful

punishment!'" (Qur'an 9: 3).

Ibn Sa'd reports that when the Prophet (pbuh) appointed Abu Bakr as overseer of the pilgrimage, he went out with three hundred men from Medina, and that he (pbuh) sent along with him twenty camels whose necks he had marked to indicate that they were intended for sacrifice.

Lessons and Principles

One: The polytheists and their pilgrimage-related traditions. As we have noted above, the pilgrimage to the sacred Ka'bah was a practice which the Arabs had inherited from Abraham, peace be upon him. As such, it was a vestige of the pure monotheism of which Abraham had been an exemplar. However, so many corrupt practices and idolatrous notions associated with the pre-Islamic era had filtered into the pilgrimage rites that they had become more like expressions of idolatry than a form of worship based on the doctrine of monotheism.

Ibn A'idh mentions that when the polytheists performed the pilgrimage alongside the Muslims, they would deliberately disturb them and attempt to get them to make mistakes by raising their voices, saying, "You have no partners except for those who belong to You, and who have no claim upon You!" Some of the polytheist men would circumambulate the Ka'bah naked, which they saw as a means of honoring and glorifying the Ka'bah! Individually they would cry out, "I circle the Ka'bah as my mother bore me, unencumbered by anything from the world which has been tainted with evil!"[361]

Abominations such as these continued until the end of the year 9 A.H., at which time the pilgrimage led by Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, took place, and he and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib delivered the warnings mentioned above to the polytheists of Mecca. In so doing, they announced the purification of God's holy house of worship and the definitive abolition of all immorality which may have been associated with it.

Two: The polytheists to whom these proclamations were addressed belonged to two categories. According to Muhammad Ibn Ishaq and others, the first category consisted of those who had concluded covenants with the Prophet (pbuh) with a time limit of up to four months, and in whose case he gave them the entire four-month period. As for the second category, it consisted of those who had open agreements with the Prophet (pbuh), that is, agreements with no time limit attached. With respect to this second group, the Qur'an limited the validity of their covenants in Chapter 9, "Repentance" to a maximum of four months, at the end of which there would be war between them and the Muslims unless they themselves entered Islam, and any of the polytheists could be killed with impunity wherever he happened to be found unless he repented and surrendered himself to God. The starting point for this four-month period was 9 Dhu al-Hijjah, 9 A.H., and it was to end on 10 Rabi' II.

Al-Kalbi is of the opinion that the four-month period applied only to those whose covenants with the Prophet (pbuh) were originally due to expire in less than four months, whereas in the case of those whose covenants were for longer periods of time, God commanded that their covenants be allowed to run their full course. This, he states, is the meaning of the verse in which God states, "Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists, and who have not subsequently failed to you in aught, nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfill their treaty to them until the end of their term. Verily, God loves those who are righteous (who fear Him)" (Qur'an 9: 4).

However, I disagree with al-Kalbi's view that Chapter 9 of the Qur'an contains nothing new, but is, rather, merely a confirmation of the covenants which already existed between the Messenger of God (pbuh) and the polytheists. For if this were the case, what point would there have been in 'Ali's reciting this chapter to the polytheists and warning them on this basis, and why would the Prophet (pbuh) have sent him expressly to do this?

Three: Further confirmation of the meaning of jihad. One finds in these events and these verses from the Qur'an fresh confirmation of the fact that jihad as defined by Islamic law is not, as the Orientalists portray it, merely defensive combat! Reflect, now, on these words of God Almighty as He warns the scattered remnants of polytheists in and around Mecca, including those in Najd and elsewhere:

(This is a declaration of) disassociation from God and His Messenger, to those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists. So travel freely, (O disbelievers), throughout the land (during) four months, but know that you cannot cause failure to God, and that, verily, God will disgrace the disbelievers. And a declaration from God and His Messenger to mankind on the day of the Greatest Pilgrimage that God is disassociated from the disbelievers, and (so is) His Messenger. So, if you repent, it shall be for your own good; but if you turn away, then know that you can never escape (from the punishment of) God. And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful punishment. Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists, and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfill their treaty to them until the end of their term. Verily, God loves those who are righteous (who fear Him)". And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. Yet if they repent, and establish prayer, and give zakah (the purifying dues), let them (go) on their way. Verily, God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" (Qur'an 9: 1-5).

These definitive verses leave no room for the notion of what is referred to as "defensive war" as a foundation for the meaning of jihad in Islam.[362]

As you may be aware, "Repentance" is one of the latest chapters of the Qur'an to be revealed, and its precepts - most of which have to do with jihad - are of permanent validity. However, I fail to see what leads some to claim that these verses abrogated previously revealed verses establishing defensive jihad, where we read, for example, "Permission (to fight) has been given to those who are being fought. And, verily, God is competent to give them victory"(Qur'an 22: 39). The reason for my objection to this claim is that the essence of jihad has to do neither with defense nor offense; rather, it aims solely to exalt the word of God and to establish a sound, healthy Islamic society under the rule of the Islamic state on earth. Hence, whatever approach is required to fulfill this aim, be it offense or defense, is the approach which ought to be adopted.

In some circumstances, the suitable means might be peaceful coexistence and the provision of advice, instruction, and guidance, in which case jihad is to be interpreted accordingly. In other circumstances, the approach required might be defensive warfare combined with admonition, guidance, and direction, all of which are also legitimate means of engaging in jihad. In still other circumstances, the required action might be aggressive warfare, which some consider to be the sublimest form of jihad. The person responsible for assessing the situation at hand and, on this basis, determining the most appropriate method of engaging in jihad, is the insightful, attentive Muslim ruler who lives in faithfulness to God and His Apostle (pbuh) and seeks to serve the best interests of the Muslim populace.

What this means is that all three of the above mentioned approaches to the practice of jihad are equally legitimate, provided that none of them be applied unless it is required by the Muslim community's current interests as they are perceived by a trustworthy Muslim ruler. It also tells us that the existence of disparate ways of practicing jihad is no indication that the principle of jihad itself has been abrogated.

Finally, let us note that this pilgrimage by Abu Bakr was a means of instructing the Muslims in the pilgrimage rites and in the proper manner of performing them; as such, it prepared the way for the establishment of the Islamic pilgrimage and for the farewell pilgrimage led by Muhammad (pbuh).

The Mosque of Sedition

Ibn Kathir narrates on the authority of Sa'd Ibn Jubayr, Qatadah, 'Urwah and others that there lived in Medina a man of the tribe of Khazraj by the name of Abu Amir al-Rahib. He had embraced Christianity during the pre-Islamic era, and he enjoyed a position of prominence among his people. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) came to Medina and the Muslims rallied around him, Islam became a force to be reckoned with. Revealing his true colors, Abu Amir became hostile toward the Messenger of God (pbuh), after which he fled to the still polytheistic members of Quraysh in Mecca and began inciting them to wage war against the Messenger of God (pbuh). Then, seeing that the cause of the Prophet (pbuh) continued to prosper, Abu Amir went to Heraclius of Byzantium seeking aid against him (pbuh). Heraclius responded by promising Abu Amir help and giving him reason to hope for victory. He then resided for a period of time with Heraclius, whence he sent word to a group of Khazrajites in Medina who were hypocrites, relaying to them the promises he had received from Heraclius and instructing them to provide him with a stronghold where the men he would be sending them could stay, and which could serve as a lookout post for him when he joined them later.

Hence, they began constructing a mosque near the Quba' Mosque, and completed the building before the Messenger of God (pbuh) departed for Tabuk. They then came to him (pbuh) and requested that he pray in their mosque, hoping thereby to support their claim that he (pbuh) had approved and blessed it. They told the Prophet (pbuh) that they had built the mosque to serve as a shelter for the weak and ill on cold winter nights. However, God prevented him (pbuh) from fulfilling their request, and he told them, "We are about to embark on a journey now, but when we return, God willing, we will do what you have asked." Then, as the Prophet (pbuh) was returning home from Tabuk and was only about a day's journey away from Medina, he was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, who told him about the true nature of the new mosque and about its builders' intention to exploit it for the purpose of creating divisions among the Muslim believers. Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) sent someone out to demolish the mosque before he arrived in Medina.[363] It was at this time that the following verses were revealed:

And (there are hypocrites) who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against God and His Messenger before. And they will surely swear, "We had but the best of intentions," and God (Himself) testifies that they are liars. Never stand (for prayer) within it. A mosque founded on righteousness from the very first day is more worthy of you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves: and God loves those who purify themselves" (Qur'an 9: 107-109).[364]

The words of God Almighty rendered, "for causing harm" point to the fact that the aim of those who built the new mosque was to do harm to the mosque in Quba', while the phrase rendered, "a house of worship founded from the very first day upon God-consciousness" is, similarly, a reference to the Quba' mosque.

Lessons and Principles

The story of this mosque exemplifies the depths to which the hypocrites had descended in their duplicity

toward the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his believing companions, for not only did it involve hypocrisy, but a plot which was being woven against the Muslims. Consequently, the position taken by the Prophet (pbuh) on this matter involved aggressive action for which he had received the needed inspiration through a revelation from his Lord. This action entailed exposing the hypocrites' true aims, then razing and burning the edifice which they had claimed was a mosque when in reality, it had been nothing but an observation post from which the hypocrites could gather information on the Muslims and a center for the hatching of conspiracies against them in the hope of destroying their unity.

The account of this final ruse by the hypocrites, taken together with earlier stories of their deception and pretenses of piety, gives us a clear understanding of the various types of judgments issued upon them by Islamic law. Despite all their lies and dissimulation, their words and actions in this world are taken at face value, and they are left to the mercy of their own consciences before God Almighty when they are judged on the Day of Resurrection. However, when they go so far as to hatch actual conspiracies against the Muslims and are caught red-handed, as it were, everything they have built for purposes of destruction must be laid waste. Evidence for this position is seen clearly in the overall policy followed by the Messenger of God (pbuh) in relation to the hypocrites.

If we reflect on the steps which were taken by the hypocrites as they prepared with such stealth to carry out their designs and the means which they employed toward this end, it becomes clear that the nature of hypocrisy is essentially the same in all times and places, and that hypocrites' basic modus operandi remains unchanged. Their existence is always one of sniveling cowardice, faithlessness, and the desire to flee from the light. They curry favor with the foreign imperialist in hopes of being provided with the means to wage war against Islam within their own countries. When they come together with their believing compatriots, they put on a show of being Muslims and wanting to invite others to embrace it; yet if they should have the opportunity to suppress any of the facts of Islam or do away with its proponents, they claim to be "advancing" the religion and doing away with the enemies of the Islamic nation!

In conclusion, then, this action taken by the Prophet (pbuh) points to the necessity of destroying those places in which God and His Apostle (pbuh) are disobeyed, even if the true nature of such places is concealed from people behind a facade of righteousness and good will. Moreover, if this is what the Prophet (pbuh) did to a mosque, then what do you suppose he would do to the many dens of iniquity and obscenity in which God is disobeyed openly? There is full agreement among Muslim scholars that 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, burned down an entire village where wine was being sold, and set fire as well to the pub of Ruwayshid al-Thaqafi, giving him the epithet of "little profligate."[365]

The Thaqif delegation and their entry into Islam

It is reported by Ibn Ishaq that the Prophet (pbuh) returned to Medina following the expedition to Tabuk in the month of Ramadan, and that during this same month, he (pbuh) was visited by a delegation from Banu Thaqif. Seeing that all of the other Arabs around them had embraced Islam and pledged allegiance to the Messenger of God (pbuh), the men of Thaqif consulted amongst themselves and reached the conclusion that they did not possess sufficient strength to go to war with their neighbors over this matter. Hence, they sent a delegation to the Prophet (pbuh) under the leadership of Kinanah Ibn 'Abd Yalil. As they were approaching Medina, al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah, a fellow tribesman of theirs, came out to receive them and instruct them in the proper manner in which to greet the Messenger of God (pbuh); however, when they saw him, they saluted him with the greeting to which they were accustomed from the pre-Islamic era.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) received the Thaqif delegation in the mosque and set up tents for them in order for them to hear the Qur'an and see the people as they prayed. The delegation stayed for a number of days, during which time they came regularly to see the Prophet (pbuh); he likewise visited them frequently, inviting them to embrace Islam.[366] Ibn Sa'd states, "He (pbuh) used to visit them every night following the final evening prayer, and he would go on speaking for so long that, weary of standing, he would begin alternatively resting his weight on one foot, then the other."[367]

In his Al-Maghazi, Musá Ibn 'Uqbah tells us about a particular member of the Thaqif delegation by the name of 'Uthman Ibn Abi al-As who, being the youngest among them, was left behind to watch their campsite while the others went to meet with the Messenger of God (pbuh). When the other members of the delegation returned to camp, which is said to have been around midday (and at which time they would take a nap), 'Uthman would betake himself to the Prophet (pbuh) and, once with him, (pbuh) he would ask him questions about the religion and have him recite the Qur'an in his hearing. If he found the Prophet (pbuh) asleep, he would go to Abu Bakr, and he continued to repeat such visits until he had become well-versed in the religion. 'Uthman kept these matters a secret from his companions, but it pleased the Prophet (pbuh), who grew very fond of him.

At last the day came when the members of the delegation were prepared to declare themselves Muslims. However, Kinanah Ibn 'Abd Yalil said to the Messenger of God (pbuh), "Concerning the matter of adultery, the men of our tribe are required to be absent from home for periods of time, so we have no choice but to engage in such acts."

He (pbuh) replied, "It is forbidden to you, for God says, 'And do not commit adultery – for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way' (Qur'an 17: 32)."

Then the delegation members said, "As for usury, this is where all our wealth comes from."

To this the Prophet (pbuh) replied, "But you still have your capital. As God Almighty declares, 'O you who believe! Fear God, and give up what remains (due to you) of interest from usury, if you should be believers' (Qur'an 2: 278)."

"And what about wine?" they asked. "It is the fruit of the earth on which we live, and we cannot do without it."

"God has forbidden it," he (pbuh) said, after which he recited to them the verses of the Qur'an in which this prohibition is found.[368]

Ibn Ishaq tells us that they also asked the Messenger of God (pbuh) to exempt them from prayer, but he said, "There is no good in a religion without prayer."

After consulting among themselves in private, they came back and said they would submit to all he had said. However, they asked him to allow them to keep "al-Lat," the idol which they had been worshipping, for three more years before they destroyed it. The Prophet (pbuh) refused to agree to this. They asked him if they could keep it for two more years, and this also he refused to grant. They asked him to let them keep it for just one year, but they received the same response. Finally they asked for permission to keep it for just one month from the time they returned to their people, but even this request he (pbuh) would not grant. Ibn Ishaq tells us that they hoped in this way to avoid the abuse which they expected to receive from their women, children, and foolish-minded people, and that they did not wish to force their people to desist from worshipping it by destroying it until Islam had entered their hearts.

Given the Messenger of God's refusal to grant any of these requests, they said, "Then you be the one to destroy it. As for us, we can never do it."

He replied, "I will send someone to do this for you."

After granting them permission to depart, the Prophet (pbuh) blessed them and sent them off with prayers for God to preserve them, having appointed as their overseer 'Uthman Ibn Abi al-As who, given his exceptional fervor for Islam, had memorized entire chapters of the Qur'an prior to their departure.

Not long after this, the Messenger of God (pbuh) sent a delegation to Thaqif under the leadership of Khalid Ibn al-Walid which included al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah and Abu Sufyan Ibn Harb. When the Muslim delegation set about destroying al-Lat, the women of Thaqif came out with their heads unveiled, weeping and lamenting the goddess's demise. Every time al-Mughirah struck it with his ax, Abu Sufyan would mock the god and the women's lamentation, saying, "Oh, what a pity! Oh, what a shame!"[369]

Narrating on the authority of al-Mughirah, may God be pleased with him, Ibn Sa'd says, "And hence it was that Thaqif entered Islam, and I know of no other Arab tribe which embraced the faith with more perfect devotion, soundness of belief, or faithfulness to God and His revelation."[370]

A succession of further Arab delegations and their entry into the religion of God

Ibn Ishaq tells us that after the Prophet (pbuh) conquered Mecca and returned from Tabuk, and once Banu Thaqif had entered Islam and pledged their allegiance to him (pbuh), Arab delegations began coming to him (pbuh) from all directions. After all, until this time the Arabs had been waiting and watching to see what would become of Islam in relation to this particular subtribe of Quraysh, since they were major leaders of Arab society who held privileged positions with respect to the Ka'bah and the holy city of Mecca, and who were openly acknowledged to be descended from Ishmael, may peace be upon him. Once Mecca had come under the Prophet's authority and all the Qurayshites had acknowledged him (pbuh) and submitted themselves to Islam, the Arabs knew that they lacked the strength to win a war against the Messenger of God (pbuh), so they began entering God's religion in throngs; as God declares, "When the victory of God has come, and the conquest, and you see the people entering the religion of God in multitudes, then exalt (him) with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance" (Qur'an 110).

As for detailed accounts of these delegations' visits, there is no need for us to discuss them in this particular context. Rather, let us turn directly to the lessons and principles relating thereto.

Lessons and Principles

Do you remember the account of those who received the Messenger of God (pbuh) with such hostility when he journeyed to al-Ta'if in search of refuge? Do you recall the identity of those who expelled him (pbuh) from their territory with utter callousness, then sent their simpletons and young boys after him to beat him, abuse him, and make sport of him? They were none other than Banu Thaqif – the same people who had now sought out the Prophet (pbuh) and entered the religion of God with all sincerity and obedience.

Do you recall when, after the Prophet's return from al-Ta'if to Mecca, Zayd Ibn Harithah asked him (pbuh), "How will you enter the city, O Messenger of God, now that they have expelled you?" to which he (pbuh) replied, "Zayd, God will provide a way out of the situation which you have witnessed. He will grant victory to His religion and to His Prophet." The conversion of Thaqif which had now taken place was confirmation of the Prophet's words to Zayd. For not only Thaqif, but Mecca itself and numerous Arab tribes had now entered the religion of God.

Pause and reflect now on all the mistreatment which the Prophet (pbuh) suffered at the hands of Thaqif and the disappointment which he met so unexpectedly after having traveled to see them on foot, crossing mountains and passing through remote valleys in the hope that they would grant him a gracious reception and a positive response to his plea. The least one might have expected from a human being in such a situation would be to contemplate revenge and to repay one insult with an another.

However, where do you find this attitude, or even a hint thereof, in the soul of the Messenger of God (pbuh) toward Thaqif? After besieging them for a number of days, then instructing his companions to return home, he was told, "Call down God's curse on Thaqif!" But he refused; instead, he lifted his hands saying, "O God, guide them aright, and bring them to me as believers!" Hence, when God answered His Apostle's prayer and the Thaqif delegation came to Medina, Abu Bakr the Righteous and al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah raced to the Messenger of God (pbuh) with the happy news, knowing how pleased he would

be to learn that Thaqif, of all people, had been guided to embrace Islam. As for the Prophet (pbuh), he went out to give them the most honorable reception, then set about devoting all his time to them, teaching them, guiding them, and advising them.

For years they had been so filled with bitterness toward the Prophet (pbuh), they had wanted nothing but to plot evil against him, whereas all he had wanted for them was well-being, happiness and guidance along the right path both in this life and the next. For so long they had reveled in the sight of him suffering misfortune and harm, whereas his only joy where they were concerned came from seeing them receive the blessing of Islam!

Do you suppose, then, that all of this virtue was nothing but the ordinary human nature of someone who was promoting a principle of which he was convinced or a doctrine which he had chosen to embrace? Or was it, rather, the nature of one endowed with the spirit of prophethood, the fruit of aspiring to achieve one single end, namely, to bring his mission to fruition such that when he met his Lord, He would be well-pleased with him? Even the direst affliction and catastrophe pale into insignificance, yielding nothing but great joy and rejoicing, for the servant who has successfully passed through the deserts of sorrow and determined to pursue this majestic goal!

True Islam is a stranger to bitterness and hatred, and wishes no one evil. It commands us to engage in jihad, yet without ill will or animosity; it teaches us to be strong, yet without egotism or arrogance. It calls us to be merciful, yet without succumbing to weakness or subjecting ourselves to humiliation; it teaches us to love, yet to do so for God's sake alone.

Hence, the delegation from Thaqif, as well as the other delegations which came to Medina in succession thereafter to enter Islam, were fulfillments of the promise of the "mighty victory "(Qur'an 48: 3) which God had promised His Apostle.

This, then, is the moral to be derived from the story of these delegations; as for the principles and precepts which it reveals, we summarize them as follows:

One: The permissibility of receiving a polytheist in a mosque if there is hope of his becoming a Muslim. As we have seen, the Prophet (pbuh) used to receive the Thaqif delegation in his mosque in order to address and instruct them. Hence, if this is permissible in the case of polytheists, then it must be even more acceptable in the case of Christians or Jews. And in fact, the Prophet (pbuh) once received a delegation of Christians from Najran when they came seeking to hear the truth and learn about Islam.

Al-Zarkashi tells us that "al-Rafi'i and al-Nawawi, may God have mercy on them, held that it is permissible for a non-Muslim to enter any mosque except for the Sacred Mosque in Mecca provided that Muslims have granted him or her permission to do so, and on the following conditions:

1- that there be no covenant of protection stipulating that the person concerned not enter the mosque,

2- that the Muslim who granted him or her permission to enter be a fully responsible, competent adult, and

3- that they be entering in order to listen to or learn about the Qur'an, and that there be hope of their becoming Muslims; or that they be entering in order to repair something related to the edifice itself.

According al-Qadi Abu` Ali al-Fariqi, if the person enters the mosque in order to listen to the Qur'an or learn about Islam but there is no hope of his embracing Islam, he should not be allowed entrance; the situation to which al-Fariqi is referring is one in which there is a sense that the person concerned holds Islam in contempt or is simply paying a courtesy visit in the hope of achieving other aims, as is done by

The delegations sent out by the Prophet (pbuh) to instruct people in the principles of Islam

Just as delegations were coming to seek out the Prophet (pbuh) to declare their submission to God and His Messenger (pbuh), he likewise began sending out representatives in all directions, and especially into southern Arabia, to teach people the principles and precepts of Islam. For by this time, Islam had spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and there was a need for teachers and guides to explain the truths of Islam so that they could take root in people's hearts.

He (pbuh) sent Khalid Ibn al-Walid to Najran in order to call its people to Islam and teach them its principles and precepts, while he sent 'Ali to Yemen.[378] He (pbuh) also sent Abu Musá al-Ash'ari and Mu'adh Ibn Jabal to Yemen after assigning each of them to a different area of the country. As he sent the two men out, the Prophet (pbuh) instructed them, saying, "(Let there be) lenience, not harshness, and good tidings, not alienation; and let everything be of people's own free will."[379] To Mu'adh he said,

You will be coming to a people who already possess a previously revealed Scripture. When you come to them, call upon them to bear witness that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is His Messenger. If they obey you in these things, tell them that God has imposed upon them five prayers every day and night. If they obey you in this, tell them that God requires them to distribute alms to be taken from their wealthy tribespeople and given to their poor. If they obey you in this also, beware lest you demand their most prized possessions, for the supplication of the oppressed is always heard by God."[380]

We read in Imam Ahmad's Musnad that he (pbuh) accompanied Mu'adh as far as the outskirts of Medina giving him instructions, with Mu'adh mounted on his camel and the Prophet (pbuh) walking along beside his. "O Mu'adh," he (pbuh) said, "You may not meet me again after this year! Instead, you may simply pass by my mosque and visit my grave." Hearing this, Mu'adh wept to think of having to part with the Messenger of God (pbuh).[381] These words of the Prophet (pbuh) were fulfilled in that Mu'adh remained in Yemen until after the Prophet's death

Lessons and Principles

The most important fact for the Muslim to glean from the account of these heralds who were sent forth by the Messenger of God (pbuh) to call others to Islam and to instruct people in its beliefs and ordinances is that the responsibility which Islam lays upon Muslims in all times and places is not as easy as most Muslims today imagine it to be. It will not suffice for us to make verbal claims to be Muslims, or for Islam to mean nothing in our lives but the performance of a few simple tasks which at one time were taken with the utmost seriousness but which have now become little more than customs and traditions. Nor is it enough for the Muslim to cling to Islam for himself alone, then close the door on others and show no concern for their welfare.

Indeed, Muslims' responsibility will not be fulfilled until they have, in addition to performing the various rites of worship and service required of them, undertaken to fulfill the equally important duty of announcing the glad tidings of Islam to others and inviting them to embrace it. This duty likewise includes

the willingness to travel to other cities and countries in order to bear the message of Islam there.

This is the trust which we have been given by the Messenger of God (pbuh); this is the unavoidable duty which is ours no matter where or when we live. Muslim scholars of all the four schools of jurisprudence agree that the fulfillment of this mission, both inside and outside the geographical areas where Muslims reside, is a collective duty. As such, Muslims will not be absolved of this responsibility or the consequences of neglecting it unless a group of them go out wherever they can to call others to God: setting forth the arguments in favor of Islam and working to remove whatever suspicions or doubts in people's minds might prevent them from embracing it for themselves. When this is done, such a group's efforts serve as sufficient fulfillment of this duty; however, if no such group rises up in a given locale in which Muslims reside, then the area's Muslim inhabitants are guilty of wrongdoing.

It is also agreed by the majority of Muslim jurisprudents that this weighty duty rests not only on Muslim men's shoulders, but on Muslim women's shoulders as well. Given each individual's particular capacities and resources, this duty belongs to all Muslims, be they male or female, free or enslaved, so long as they are fully competent, responsible adults capable of shouldering the burdens of Muslim "evangelization" and guidance.[382]

The directions given by the Messenger of God (pbuh) to Mu'adh and Abu Musá al-Ash'ari point to certain rules of etiquette which those who call others to God should adhere to as they engage in instruction and guidance. One such rule is to place greater emphasis on tolerance and forbearance than on rigor and limitations, and to focus more on glad tidings than on warnings or threats. Clarifying this rule through a practical example, the Messenger of God (pbuh) instructed Mu'adh to invite people first to utter the dual confession that, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." If they responded to this invitation, he was to call upon them to perform the five daily prayers; if they responded positively to this exhortation as well, he was to urge them to pay the zakah, and so on.

At the same time, however, the emphasis upon tolerance and good tidings must not lead to a transgression of the limits of what is lawful through the alteration or distortion of Islam's ordinances and concepts for the sake of making things easier for people. After all, tolerance does not mean approving disobedience no matter what form it happens to take, even though this same attitude may play a role in determining the means by which disobedience is to be combated.

Another such rule of conduct for those seeking to help others submit themselves to God – and which applies likewise to those in positions of earthly power and authority – is to beware of committing injustice against anyone, particularly in matters pertaining to people's rightful claim on their wealth and property. Taking what belongs by right to another is a serious transgression, indeed; and just as those in possession of authority and power can fall prey to such a sin, so also can those involved in calling others to Islam if they fail to remain conscious of their true responsibilities or of God's awareness of all they do. When the Prophet (pbuh) dispatched Mu'adh, may God be pleased with him, to Yemen, he was entrusting him with the responsibilities of both an evangelist, as it were, and a governor and guardian over others; hence, he (pbuh) warned his emissary against falling into any sort of wrongdoing, saying, "Beware of the supplications of the oppressed, for they are always heard by God!"

The Prophet's farewell pilgrimage and address

Imam Muslim relates the following account on the authority of Jabir, who said,

The Messenger of God (pbuh) stayed in Medina for nine years without performing the major pilgrimage. Then, in the tenth year, he issued an announcement that he would be going on the pilgrimage to Mecca. In response, many people came to Medina, all of them hoping to follow the Prophet's example, and he (pbuh) departed from Medina five days before the end of Dhu al-Qa'dah.[383]

When his she-camel had begun making its way through the desert, I looked up, and as far as the eye could see, there were people who had come out to join the Prophet (pbuh). Some were mounted and others on foot, some were to his right, some to his left, and some behind him. And, thus surrounded by all of us, he was receiving the Qur'anic revelation as it descended.

According to narrators from among the inhabitants of Medina, the Prophet (pbuh) announced his intention to perform the major pilgrimage alone, whereas other narrators hold that he set forth to combine the major and the minor pilgrimages. Still others state that when he (pbuh) entered Mecca he was intending to perform only the minor pilgrimage, after which he decided to complete the major pilgrimage as well.

Be that as it may, he (pbuh) entered Mecca via Kada' and headed for the Banu Shaybah gate. When he saw the Ka'bah, he said, "O God, increase the honor, glory, renown, and splendor of this house, and grant honor, glory, esteem, dignity, and righteousness to those who sanctify it by coming to it in pilgrimage."[384] He (pbuh) then continued his pilgrimage, teaching the people its rites as he went.[385]

On the day of 'Arafah, the Messenger of God (pbuh) delivered the following address to the Muslims who had gathered about him:

"O people, hear my words, for I do not know whether I shall meet with you again in this place. O people, let your lives and your possessions be as sacred to you as this day, in this month, in this country of yours. Indeed, everything pertaining to the past time of ignorance has been placed beneath my feet; the blood (shed) during that time is likewise placed under my feet, and the first blood I thus place (under my authority) is that of Ibn Rabi'ah Ibn al-Harith. Similarly, the usury of the time of ignorance has been placed (under my authority), and the first person whose usury I claim authority over is al-'Abbas Ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib.

"O people, Satan has despaired of ever being worshipped in this land of yours. However, he will be content to be worshipped in those acts of yours which you disdain to consider of any importance. So guard your religion. O people, 'the intercalation (of months) is but one more instance of refusal to acknowledge the truth – a means by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led astray. They declare this (intercalation) to be permissible in one year and forbidden in (another) year in order to conform (outwardly) to the number of months which God has hallowed: and thus they make allowable what God has forbidden.'[386] Time (still) revolves as it did on the day when God created the heavens and the earth. The year is composed of twelve months, of which four are sacred: Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah,

Muharram, and Rajab, which falls between Jumadá and Sha'ban.

"Be conscious of God in your relations with women. If you take them under God's protection, rendering intimate contact with them lawful to you through the word of God, you shall have rights over them and they shall have rights over you: You shall have the right to expect that they will not receive anyone whom you would disapprove of (and should they do so, strike them lightly); whereas they shall have the right to expect you to provide them, in kindness and consideration, with material sustenance and clothing.

"Take my words to heart, O people, for I have completed what I came to accomplish, and I have left you with something which, if you cling to it, you will never again go astray: the book of God, and the Sunnah of His Apostle.

"O people, so long as your (Muslim) leader adheres to the Book of God Almighty, listen to him and obey him even if he should be an Abyssinian slave with one ear cut off.

"As for your slaves, feed them the same food which you eat yourselves and clothe them in whatever you yourselves wear; and if they should commit an error for which you are not willing to forgive them, do not torment them but, rather, sell them, for they, too, are God's servants.[387]

"O people, hear my words and take them to heart. Remember that every Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim; hence, none of you is permitted to take from his brother anything but what he has freely given. Do not wrong or oppress one another. Have I made myself clear? You shall all meet your Lord, so when I am no longer among you, do not revert to your wayward practice of killing each other (without cause).

"Let those who have been present to hear these words of mine pass them on to those who were absent. For indeed, it is possible that some who hear my words through the reports of others will act on them more conscientiously than some of those who heard them with their own ears.

"When you are asked about me (on the Day of Resurrection), what will you say?"

"They replied, 'We bear witness that you have delivered the message, fulfilled the mission you were given, and admonished us with wisdom.'

After raising his forefinger first toward heaven, then toward his listeners, he (pbuh) said, "God, be our witness! God, be our witness! God, be our witness!"[388]

The Prophet (pbuh) then stayed at 'Arafat until sundown, after which he took those with him to al-Muzdalifah. As they moved along, he gestured with his right hand, saying, "Be calm, and know God's presence! Be calm, and know God's presence!"

While still in al-Muzdalifah, he (pbuh) delayed the maghrib, or sundown, prayer, then performed it together with the 'isha', or final evening prayer. Then, after spending the night at al-Muzdalifah, he left before sunrise for Mina, where he threw seven pebbles at the three stone pillars.[389] With every pebble he threw, he (pbuh) exclaimed, "God is greater!"

He (pbuh) departed for the place of sacrifice, where he slaughtered 63 camels. He then handed the task over to 'Ali, who slaughtered 37 more, bringing the total to one hundred. After this, the Prophet (pbuh) made his way to the Ka'bah, where he prayed the noon prayer. While in Mecca, he (pbuh) approached Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib as they drew drinking water from the Well of Zamzam and said, "Draw the water, O sons of 'Abd al-Muttalib. If I did not fear that the people would crowd about us as you attend to your task, I would draw with you." In response, they handed him a pail, and he drank from it.[390] Then he (pbuh) turned and made his way back to Medina.

Lessons and Principles

One: The number of times the Prophet (pbuh) performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the time period during which its performance is legitimate. Muslim scholars differ as to whether the Messenger of God (pbuh) performed the pilgrimage to Mecca on any occasion other than the one described here. Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah state that he (pbuh) went on the pilgrimage three times prior to his emigration to Medina; according to al-Hafié Ibn Hajar, this view "is based on the number of delegations of the Helpers which went to al-'Aqabah at Miná after the pilgrimage. The first time they went, they agreed on a date on which to meet again; the second time, they made their first pledge of allegiance to the Prophet (pbuh); and the third time, they made their second pledge of allegiance."[391] There are others who narrate that he (pbuh) performed the pilgrimage every year before he emigrated to Medina.

Be that as it may, what is certain is that the performance of the pilgrimage was not established as a duty for Muslims until the year 10 A.H., and that the Prophet (pbuh) only performed it once after this. Consequently, many of the Companions referred to this "farewell pilgrimage" as "the pilgrimage of Islam," or "the Messenger of God's pilgrimage," the latter of which is the title which Imam Muslim gave to the hadith concerning this event. Evidence in support of this view may be found in the hadith narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari about the 'Abd al-Qays delegation which came to the Prophet in the year 9 A.H., and whose members said to him (pbuh), "Give us a definitive command which we can pass on to those who come after us, and by which we can enter Paradise." He (pbuh) replied, saying, "I will give you four commands, and four prohibitions." Enumerating the commands, he said, "I command you to have faith in God, to perform the (five daily) prayers, to pay the zakah, to fast the month of Ramadan, and to donate one-fifth of all spoils of war which you receive."

It appears that he (pbuh) mentioned the matter of faith not as a separate command, since it was already known to them, but in order to reemphasize its importance and affirm that faith is the foundation for the four commandments which follow it. But if the pilgrimage had been required of Muslims at that time, the Prophet (pbuh) would have included it in the list of commands which he gave this delegation.

Two: The primary significance of this pilgrimage by the Messenger of God (pbuh). This pilgrimage performed by the Prophet (pbuh) bears great significance pertaining not only to his biography, but also to the call to embrace Islam and the overall form taken by the Islamic way of life. By the time the Prophet (pbuh) went on this pilgrimage, he had instructed the Muslims in prayer, fasting, the payment of the zakah and all other duties and forms of worship required of them as Muslims. Hence, now that the idols which had once surrounded the Ka'bah had been destroyed and the Ka'bah cleansed of the idols within it, and now that the traditions which had been handed down from pre-Islamic times in connection with the pilgrimage season, including such things as hand clapping, whistling and nakedness during the circumambulation of the Ka'bah, had been done away with, all that remained was for him (pbuh) to teach them the rites of the pilgrimage and the proper manner of performing them.

The call to make pilgrimage to the sacred Ka'bah will remain in effect until the Day of Resurrection. After all, it is the same call which was issued by the forefather of the prophets, Abraham, may blessings and peace be upon him, by the command of his Almighty Lord. However, the perversions and distortions which had been introduced into the pilgrimage during the pre-Islamic era with its profane ways had tainted it with the appearance of unbelief and idolatry. As for Islam, it had come to cleanse the pilgrimage of all corrupt practices so that, restored now to its former pristine state, it could radiate the light of monotheism and rest upon the foundation of complete devotion to God Almighty.

It was for this reason that the Prophet (pbuh) announced that he would be performing the pilgrimage to God's sacred house, and it was likewise for this reason that, once they had heard his announcement, people came from all directions in order to follow his (pbuh) example and learn how to correctly perform the pilgrimage lest they fall back into the obsolete practices of the era of ignorance.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) appears to have been aware that his mission on earth was about to end; he had carried out the task with which he had been entrusted, and as a consequence, the fruits of monotheism had begun to mature on the Arabian Peninsula and Islam had spread far and wide, taking firmer and firmer root in people's souls. However, since the Muslims had grown in numbers and were scattered throughout various locations, they yearned to meet more with their Apostle (pbuh) and to benefit from his guidance and counsel. He (pbuh) likewise longed to meet with them, especially with those who had recently entered Islam in various parts of the Arabian Peninsula but who had not had sufficient opportunities to meet with him (pbuh). And now the greatest, most wonderful opportunity for such an encounter had presented itself through the pilgrimage to the sacred Ka'bah and on the foothills of Mount 'Arafat: an encounter between a nation and their Apostle in the context of one of Islam's most magnificent rites, and one which, in the knowledge of God Almighty and the intuition given to His Messenger, would be an encounter of parting admonitions and farewell.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) also wished to meet with the many new Muslims whose conversions had been the fruit of a 23- year struggle, in order to summarize for them the teachings of Islam in such a way that he could express his innermost feelings and his love for his people. By looking into their faces, he (pbuh) could discern the images of their descendents; hence, in speaking to those gathered before him, he was, in a sense, delivering his admonitions and instructions across the barriers of time and addressing generations to come.

These, then, are some of the meanings of this farewell pilgrimage by the Messenger of God (pbuh), meanings which found expression through the address which he delivered in the 'Uranah Valley on the Day of 'Arafah.

Three: Reflections on the Prophet's farewell address. What marvelous words were those which he uttered on the foothills of Mount 'Arafat, and by means of which he addressed future generations after having fulfilled the trust given to him, provided guidance and admonition to the Muslim nation, and striven tirelessly for twenty-three years to call others to faith in his Lord. And what a marvelous hour it was in which thousands upon thousands who at one time had lain in wait for him (pbuh), plotting ways to harm him and making war against him, now gathered about him in reverence and humility. Thousands upon thousands, the sight of whom filled the horizon in all directions, stood before the Apostle (pbuh) in whole-hearted submission, thereby reflecting the words of God Almighty, "Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand up" (Qur'an 40: 51).

Looking through their faces at the coming generations, that is, at the Islamic world which would one day extend throughout the globe, he (pbuh) commenced his farewell, saying, "O people, give ear to my words, for I do not know whether I shall meet with you again in this place..." The entire world – from the stones in the desert wastelands to bustling metropolitan centers – gave ear as the Messenger of God (pbuh), whose presence had blessed them for 63 years, alluded to his imminent departure after having carried out the command of his Lord and planted the seeds of faith on Earth.

The six clauses of the Prophet's farewell address

Clause One: As if he (pbuh) were being inspired with knowledge of the perils and temptations to which his nation would be subject as time went on -- going astray by following others and losing sight of the guiding light which he had placed in their hands -- the Prophet (pbuh) began his address with the words, "O people, let your lives and your possessions be as sacred to you as this day, in this month, in this country of yours, until you meet your Lord." This same admonition is repeated at the end of his address; in this way, the Messenger of God (pbuh) stresses the necessity of showing concern for this point. He states, "Remember that every Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim; hence, none of you shall take from his brother anything but what he has freely given. Do not wrong or oppress one another. Have I made myself clear?"

To this we reply: Indeed, you have, O Messenger of God! You have made yourself perfectly clear, and perhaps we today are the ones who most need to listen to you and respond, even if in so doing, we are acknowledging a responsibility which we have been shamelessly remiss in fulfilling.

Clause Two: The second clause is not only an admonition, but even more importantly, a decision which the Prophet (pbuh) was announcing to those gathered around him and to the nations which would succeed him. He states, "Indeed, everything pertaining to the past time of ignorance has been placed beneath my feet, both the blood shed during that time and the usury collected... "

What, then, is the meaning of this decision? The Prophet (pbuh) is saying, in effect, that all the traditions to which those in pre-Islamic times clung so tenaciously and in which they took such pride – traditions associated with tribal zeal and loyalties, discriminations based on language, lineage, and ethnic identity, and people's enslavement of one another with chains of injustice and usury – have now been rendered null and void; they are nothing but a rank corpse which God's law has buried deep in the earth. Hence, their place in Muslims' lives is beneath their feet; they are atrocities which have seen their last, errors which have fled from sight, and calamities never to be suffered again.

Who of us would dig up a rotting cadaver and embrace it? What person in his right mind would go rummaging through the filth from which he had once been cleansed so as to foul himself with it again? What self-respecting human being would head back toward the chains which he had once broken and cast aside, then fix them and bind himself in them once more?!

By declaring such a break between corrupt pre-Islamic traditions and humankind's intellectual and cultural advancement, the Messenger of God (pbuh) was proclaiming for the sake of posterity the world over that if someone who claims to have achieved intellectual progress goes digging things up out of this bygone past, he will simply be lost anew in dark, ancient history no matter what claims he makes to the contrary.

Clause Three: The Prophet (pbuh) announced that henceforth there was to be adherence to the lunar months into which the year is divided. We learn from Mujahid and others that the Arabs in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods had adopted the practice of performing the pilgrimage in a certain month, for example, Dhu al-Hijjah, for two years, after which they would perform it in another month, such as Muharram, for the following two years, and so on. When the Prophet (pbuh) performed his

pilgrimage, it fell in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, at which time he proclaimed, "Time (still) revolves as it did on the day when God created the heavens and the earth." In other words, he (pbuh) was commanding the people not to manipulate the months by moving them forward or back; at the same time, he (pbuh) was declaring that the pilgrimage would, henceforth, be performed solely during the month of Dhu al-Hijjah.

Some scholars have mentioned that the polytheists used to calculate their year on the basis of twelve months plus fifteen days; as a consequence, the pilgrimage fell sometimes in Ramadan, and other times in Shawwal, Dhu al-Qa'dah, and all of the other months of the year. This is why Abu Bakr's pilgrimage in 9 A.H. fell in the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah. When the Messenger of God (pbuh) made his farewell pilgrimage the following year, it fell on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijjah, which corresponded to the new moon. At that time he (pbuh) announced the abolition of the old method of calculating the year, which thenceforth would be exactly twelve months. According to al-Qurtubi, the Prophet's statement that "Time (still) revolves as it did on the day when God created the heavens and the earth" means that the time of the pilgrimage had been restored to the time which God had originally appointed for it on the day He created the heavens and the earth.[392]

In Clause Four, the Messenger of God (pbuh) admonished his listeners concerning the good treatment of women. In a concise, comprehensive word, he (pbuh) did away with the injustice which had been practiced against women in the pre-Islamic era and affirmed the guarantees of women's human dignity as they are set forth in the precepts of the Islamic law.

This point was worthy of reaffirmation due to the presence of those who had only recently abandoned the kinds of pre-Islamic traditions which called for the neglect of women and the refusal to acknowledge any of their rights. Another aspect of the wisdom revealed in the Prophet's attention to this matter is that by stressing its importance, he (pbuh) was ensuring that Muslims of all ages and generations would remain aware of the immense difference between the dignity and natural rights enjoyed by women under the protection of the law of Islam, and the various means employed by some to exploit women for their own pleasure and amusement – which is precisely what Islam opposes.

In Clause Five, the Prophet (pbuh) presented his listeners with two sources of guidance and help which, if people steadfastly abide by them, will protect them from error and despair no matter what problems they happen to face, namely: The Book of God and the Sunnah of His Apostle. He (pbuh) presents this pledge and guarantee to all succeeding generations, thereby making clear that the legitimacy of these two guides is not limited to a particular age, and that no cultural development or time-bound customs must be given the authority to supercede them.

In Clause Six, he (pbuh) clarifies the relationship that should exist between the Muslim ruler or caliph and his subjects. As long as the Muslim leader is ruling on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, his people are to grant him their complete obedience without respect to his ancestry or appearance. However, should he deviate from what is found in these two sources of guidance, he deserves neither to be listened to nor obeyed. There is no justification for loyalty and obedience to a leader who does not conduct himself on the basis of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah.

In this manner, the Messenger of God (pbuh) made clear that beyond the limits of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, no ruler enjoys any distinction over anyone else, nor can his earthly authority as a ruler raise him so much as a hair's breadth above the level of the Islamic order. For in reality, he is not a ruler, nor does he enjoy any actual authority; rather, he is a servant who has been entrusted by other Muslims with the task of establishing the rule of God Almighty. Islamic law recognizes no such thing as immunity or special privileges for a certain class of Muslims in matters of government, law and the judiciary.

In sum, the Messenger of God (pbuh) communicated through these words that he had carried out the

responsibility of calling others to submit themselves to God. By the time he (pbuh) delivered this address, Islam had spread far and wide, the futile ways of the pre-Islamic era and its concomitant polytheism had been abolished, and the provisions of the divine law had been delivered to those who were meant to receive them. Addressing all humanity, God declared, "This day I have perfected your religious law for you, and I have bestowed upon you the full measure of my blessings, and willed that self-surrender to me (islam) shall be your religion" (Qur'an 5: 3).

Even so, wishing to reassure himself of his people's acknowledgment of this before God Almighty on the Day of Resurrection, he added, "When you are asked about me (on the Day of Judgment), what will you say?"

In response, they cried out, "We bear witness that you have delivered the message, fulfilled the mission you were given, and admonished us with wisdom."

And only then was the great Messenger (pbuh) satisfied! He had wanted to verify the testimony with which he would meet his Lord face to face and, having received the reassurance which he sought, his eyes shone with contentment. Raising his forefinger toward heaven, then toward the people, he (pbuh) said, "God, be our witness! God, be our witness! God, be our witness!"

His farewell address now delivered, the Prophet (pbuh) completed his pilgrimage, drank his fill from the Well of Zamzam, taught the people the pilgrimage rites, and made his way back to Medina to carry on with his efforts and struggle on behalf of the religion of God Almighty.

What a profound source of contentment it must have been for the Messenger of God (pbuh) to have spent his youth and, indeed, his entire life spreading the law of his Majestic Lord, then to see the fruit of his labor: voices raised in acknowledgment of God's unity, foreheads on the ground in humble prostration to God, and hearts overflowing with love for the Divine. How overjoyed God's beloved must have been to recall the parching thirst he had once endured, the homeless wandering in desert wastelands, and the torment of being mocked and persecuted for the sake of this faith which he had sown on God's earth!

May your eyes sparkle with happiness and delight, O Messenger of God, and may your Lord anoint your heart today with praise, exultation, and joy! However, this was not merely the testimony of the multitudes who were gathered about you on that day. Rather, it will continue to be the testimony of Muslims of every generation and in every age until God inherits the earth and all therein. At that time, all creation will declare, "We bear witness, O Messenger of God, that you have delivered the message, fulfilled the mission you were given, and admonished us with wisdom! May God bestow upon you the greatest reward ever bestowed upon a prophet on behalf of his nation."

However, the responsibility for spreading the message of Islam has now passed from your shoulders to ours, and how far we are from doing it justice! What a sense of failure we will suffer when we meet you again if we come to the encounter burdened with a past of neglect, sloth, and worldly attachments, while your righteous, noble Companions gather about you with their hands and, indeed, their entire bodies bearing witness to the blood they shed, the effort they expended, and the willingness they demonstrated to crush the world beneath their feet in defense of your sacred law, your message and your mission, all the while finding their consolation in the struggle which you yourself once endured.

May God reform us and all Muslims, rousing us from the drunken stupor in which the world has left us, sobering us from our intoxication with fleeting lusts and desires, and enfolding us in His loving kindness, compassion and munificence.

The Messenger of God's Illness and His Reunion with His Celestial Companion

The dispatchment of Usamah Ibn Zayd to al-Balqa'

As soon as the Messenger of God (pbuh) returned to Medina, he ordered the Muslims to prepare themselves for an expedition against the Byzantines, and he chose Usamah Ibn Zayd, may God be pleased with him, to head the campaign. He first gave Usamah instructions to march to the place where his father, Zayd Ibn Harithah, had been slain, and to station the army on the borders of al-Balqa' and al-Darum with the land of Palestine.

Offended, the hypocrites began saying, "He has placed a young upstart in command over the Emigrants and the Helpers!"[393]

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) learned of what the hypocrites had been saying, he went out with his head wrapped in a sash[394] and addressed the people, saying, "If you challenge the leadership of Usamah Ibn Zayd, it comes as no surprise, since you challenged the leadership of his father, Zayd Ibn Harithah, before him. But God is my witness that Zayd was worthy of this position, and that he was the dearest of all people to me. God is my witness that Usamah, likewise, is worthy of this task and that he, like his father, is someone I hold most dear. Hence, I commend him to you, for he is one of your most righteous men."[395]

Hence, the Muslims prepared for battle and the Prophet (pbuh) sent all the Emigrants and Helpers out with Usamah, who first led his army to the outskirts of the city, then encamped with them at al-Jurf, a site about three and a half miles from Medina.

The Messenger of God's Illness

In the meantime, the Messenger of God (pbuh) continued to grow increasingly ill; hence, the army remained in place, waiting for God's decree. Concerning the beginning of the Prophet's illness, the following account is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd on the authority of Abu Muwayhibah, the Prophet's servant, who said:

It was the middle of the night and the Messenger of God (pbuh) said to me, "Abu Muwayhibah, I have been commanded to ask God's forgiveness for the inhabitants of the al-Baqi' graveyard, so come with me."

So I went with him, and when we were standing at the graves, he (pbuh) said, "Peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the graves. Now that you have reached that state which all people are bound to reach, may your sufferings therein be allayed. Just as the end of the dark night follows upon its beginning, so uprisings and temptations follow one upon another, with each succeeding rebellion being worse than the one that preceded it."

Then he said to me, "I have been given the keys to this world's treasure houses and the power to enjoy them forever. However, I was given a choice between this, and meeting my Lord and enjoying Paradise."

"Precious Messenger of God," I replied, "take the keys to the world's treasure houses and enjoy them for all eternity; then enter Paradise as well!"

"But no, Abu Muwayhibah!" he (pbuh) replied, "I have chosen to meet my Lord, and thereby to enter Paradise."

After saying this, he (pbuh) prayed for God's forgiveness for the people in the cemetery, then departed, and as he was leaving the graveyard, the pain which would lead to his death came upon him for the first time. [396]

The first pain which he (pbuh) began to suffer came late in the month of Safar, 11 A.H. in the form of a severe headache. It is reported by A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, that when the Prophet (pbuh) returned from al-Baqi', she received him with the words, "Your poor head!" In reply, he said, "Rightly do you speak, A'ishah. My poor head!"[397] After this, the pain grew worse, as if a high fever were coming over him, so A'ishah recited passages from the Qur'an in which there are pleas for protection by God from various forms of evil and harm. According to a hadith narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari on the authority of 'Urwah, A'ishah said, "Whenever the Messenger of God (pbuh) began to feel more ill, he would blow on himself while reciting similar passages from the Qur'an,[398] and rub himself with his hand. So when his final pains began coming upon him, I began reciting the same passages and rubbing him with his own hand."

Knowing of the Prophet's special fondness for A'ishah, his other wives could sense his desire to be cared for in her house and they granted permission for him to do so. Hence, leaning for support on al-Fadl Ibn al-'Abbas and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with them, he left Maymunah's house to stay with A'ishah. After going to A'ishah's, his pain worsened. However, aware of how anxious and despondent his Companions had been about his condition, he said, "Pour water over me from seven waterskins whose thongs have not been loosened so that I can go out and speak to the people."

"So," continued A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, "we sat him in a washtub and started pouring water on him from those waterskins until he gestured to us with his hand, indicating that the treatment had been sufficient. Then he (pbuh) went out to the people, prayed with them, and spoke to them.[399] With his head wrapped on account of the pain, he (pbuh) sat down in the pulpit and asked God's blessings and forgiveness for the Companions who had fought at the Battle of Uhud. Then he said,

"(There is) a servant to whom God has given a choice between the best this world can offer and what is with God, and he has chosen what is with God."

Weeping over what the Prophet (pbuh) had said (since he understood the meaning behind his words), Abu Bakr cried out, "Let our mothers and fathers be your ransom!"

"Easy does it!" the Prophet (pbuh) replied.

Then, addressing all those listening, he said, "No one has been more generous toward me with his wealth or his friendship than Abu Bakr. If I were to take on an intimate companion, it would be Abu Bakr. O brothers in Islam, leave no doorway in the mosque open but that of Abu Bakr.[400] I am going before you to the Pool,[401] and it is I who will bear witness for or against you on the Day of Judgment. Once I am gone, I have no fear that you will attribute divinity to any being besides God; however, I fear for you lest you begin striving after worldly gain.[402]

The Messenger of God (pbuh) then returned home, and no sooner had he arrived than his pain grew even worse than before.

A'ishah relates the following,

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) had become ill, he said to me, "Call for Abu Bakr, your father and your brother, so that I can draw up a written statement (designating him as my successor). I fear that some other person with aspirations to leadership will say, 'I am more worthy.' However, God and the believers will have no one but Abu Bakr."[403]

The following is narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him, who said,

When the Messenger of God (pbuh) began growing steadily more ill, he said to certain men who were in the house with him, "Come, let me draw up a written statement which will prevent you from going astray later."

In response, some of them said, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) continues to be in more and more pain, but we have the Qur'an. The Book of God is sufficient for us."

As for those in the Prophet's household, some of them said, "Come and let him draw up a statement to guide you later," while others said otherwise. When their arguments had reached a fever's pitch, the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "Rise and depart."[404]

By this time, the Prophet (pbuh) could no longer bear to go out and pray in public, so he said, "Instruct Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer."

A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, replied, "O Messenger of God, Abu Bakr is a delicate man, and if he took your place as the prayer leader, he could hardly make himself heard."

He (pbuh) said, "Like the women who wagged their tongues in the days of the Prophet Joseph without knowing of what they spoke, you are making judgments without adequate understanding."

Then he (pbuh) repeated his instructions, saying, "Have Abu Bakr lead the people in prayer."[405]

From that day onward, the congregational prayers were led by Abu Bakr. One day the Prophet (pbuh) came out despite the fact that he was feeling somewhat dizzy, and when he arrived at the mosque he found Abu Bakr standing and leading the people in prayer. When he saw the Prophet (pbuh), Abu Bakr stepped back, but the Prophet motioned to him to remain where he was. The Messenger of God (pbuh) then came and sat down beside Abu Bakr, after which Abu Bakr followed the Prophet's lead in prayer, while the other worshippers followed Abu Bakr.[406]

The people took the Prophet's coming out that day as an encouraging sign; however, his fever then worsened again, and this was the last time he came out for congregational prayer. The following account is narrated by Ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, who said,

I went in to see the Prophet (pbuh) when he was ill and I touched his hand.

"O Messenger of God," I said, "you are very ill indeed."

"Yes, I am," he replied. "My sufferings are equal to those of two men like you."

"Is that because you will receive two rewards?"

"Yes. But if any Muslim suffers due to illness or any other cause, God will cause his evil deeds to fall away from him just as the leaves fall from a tree."[407]

During this same period of time, the Prophet (pbuh) would throw a blanket over his face; then, when he was particularly distressed by the pain, he would remove it from his face and say, "God's curse is upon the Jews and the Christians (who) make the graves of their prophets into places of worship."[408] In so saying, it was as if he were warning the Muslims against doing the same to him (pbuh).

The Messenger of God (pbuh) and the throes of death

Death is a divinely decreed reality for all human beings. As God Almighty declares, "Indeed, you bound to die, (O Muhammad,) and indeed, they, too, are bound to die" (Qur'an 39: 30). As the Muslims were praying behind Abu Bakr in the early dawn hours of Monday, 12 Rabi' al-Awwal, 11 A.H., the curtain drawn over the entrance to A'ishah's quarters was parted, and the Messenger of God (pbuh) emerged. As he looked at the worshippers standing in rows for the congregational prayer, he broke into a smile and laughed. Thinking that the Messenger of God (pbuh) wished to come out and pray with them, Abu Bakr stepped back to join the row of worshippers behind him, and they were all so overjoyed to see him (pbuh), they nearly stopped praying. As for the Prophet (pbuh), he motioned with his hand in such a way as to say: Carry on! Then he went back into A'ishah's room and closed the curtain behind him.[409]

The people then departed from the mosque thinking that the Prophet (pbuh) had recovered from his illness. However, it soon became apparent that he had simply come out to cast a parting glance at his Companions. For soon thereafter, he (pbuh) sought refuge again in A'ishah's arms. As she pillowed his head on her bosom, the throes of death began to come over him. She said, "In his hands he held a container with water in it, and he began placing his hands in the water and wiping his face with it, saying, 'There is no god but Allah, and with death comes affliction."[410] Whenever Fatimah, may God be pleased with her, saw her father in such pain she would say, "Oh, my father is suffering so badly!" And he (pbuh) would reply, "From this day on, your father will suffer no more."[411]

A'ishah said, "When he was about to die, God caused his saliva to mingle with mine. 'Abd al-Rahman came in to see me as I was holding the Messenger of God (pbuh) in my arms, and in his hand he held a siwak.[412] I saw him (pbuh) looking at it, and I knew that he wanted it, so I said, 'Shall I take it for you?' and he nodded to indicate that he did. So I took the stick, and as I did so, another wave of pain came over him. Then I asked him, 'Shall I soften it for you?' and he nodded. So I softened it for him and he passed it over his teeth. He was holding a container of water which he would dip his hands into, then wipe his face and say, 'There is no god but God, and with death comes affliction.' Then he raised his hand and began to say, 'The heavenly Companion...' until his spirit was taken, and his hand fell limp."[413]

The news of the Prophet's death soon spread, and Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, got on his horse and came from his home in al-Sunh. (He had returned to his house there, hoping that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had recovered from his illness.) When he arrived, he entered the mosque and went directly to A'ishah's quarters without speaking to any one on the way. Seeing the Messenger of God (pbuh) wrapped in a spotted Yemeni robe, Abu Bakr went over to him, uncovered his face, and fell upon him with kisses, saying, "Precious Messenger of God, God will not allow you to die twice! Rather, the death which was ordained for you, you have already died."[414]

As Abu Bakr came out of A'ishah's quarters, he found 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab telling people that the Messenger of God (pbuh) had not died, but that he had gone to be with his Lord the way Musá Ibn 'Imran had done, and that he (pbuh) would not die until God had destroyed all of the hypocrites. Hearing what

'Umar was saying, Abu Bakr came up to him and said, "Calm down, 'Umar, and be quiet!"

However, 'Umar was so agitated, he went right on talking. When Abu Bakr saw that 'Umar was unwilling to be quiet, he himself started approaching people, and eventually, they began listening to him rather than 'Umar. Then he said, "O people! If any of you has been worshipping Muhammad (pbuh), let it be known that Muhammad is dead; as for those of you who worship God, let it be known to them that God is alive, and will never die. God Almighty has declared, 'Muhammad is nothing but a messenger. (Other) messengers have passed away before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels (to disbelief)?' (Qur'an 3: 144)." Then, as if people were not aware that God had revealed these words until Abu Bakr recited them to them, they latched onto them wholeheartedly, and everyone who heard them began reciting them himself. 'Umar later recalled, "When I heard Abu Bakr recite this verse and I realized that the Prophet (pbuh) had died, I was so stunned, my legs collapsed under me and I fell to the ground."[415]

Hadith narrators and scholars agree that he (pbuh) died early in the year 11 A.H. at the age of sixty-three, having lived forty years in Mecca prior to his calling, followed by another thirteen years in Mecca calling others to Islam, and ten years in Medina after his emigration there. Al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of 'Amr Ibn al-Harith that "the Messenger of God (pbuh) did not leave behind so much as a single dinar or dirhem, nor did he leave behind male or female slaves. The only earthly possessions he left behind were the white mule he used to ride, his weapon, and some land which he had donated as alms for the sake of wayfarers."

Lessons and Principles

Through the events of this final chapter of the Prophet's life there emerges the story of the paramount fact of human existence. It is the fact in the face of which the tyranny of the proud and arrogant, the obstinacy of the atheist, and the injustice of those engaged in oppression and self-deification come to naught. It is the reality which casts a pall of transience and mortality over this entire tumultuous earthly existence of ours, transforming human life into one of humble devotion, servanthood, and insignificance before the Subduer of the heavens and the earth. It is the reality in which all of us – willingly or unwillingly – will ultimately be clothed: the obedient and the rebellious, leaders and demigods, apostles and prophets, best friends and confidants, rich and poor, and the proponents of science and modern inventions!

It is the reality which declares in all times and places – in the ear of every listener and the mind of every thinker – that divinity and authority belong solely to the One who alone exists to all eternity. It is He whose judgments can never be revoked, whose power knows no limits, whose rule is inescapable, and whose command no one can supercede.

And what testifies to this reality with greater clarity and force than death and the agony which attends it? Through this, God has subdued all inhabitants of the universe since the dawn of existence, and He will continue to do so until our sun no longer shines. The world has witnessed the passing of untold numbers of people who were at one time overwhelmed even by the trifling measure of power they had been given, the sciences they had understood, or the inventions they had brought forth. However, this paramount reality rescued them from the state they were in, plunging them instead into the hitherto unknown realm of humble adoration and awakening them to the reality of their subordination to the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, the Possessor of all rule and dominion. And in this awakening, they came to God as lowly, submissive servants!

"Every human being is bound to taste death...." (Qur'an 21: 35). These words express an unconditional absolute, a generalization without exceptions on which nothing in the entire world could place a limit. Let

the proponents of modern science and progress come forth with the enthusiasts of the "space invasion." Let them marshal all their varied resources in the hope of warding off even a fraction of the power of this death which has subjugated and imperiled them, or of invalidating even a part of the divine challenge, "Every human being is bound to taste death...." Then, if they succeed in this endeavor, they can construct towering edifices of tyranny, oppression, godlessness and self-aggrandizement. Otherwise, it would be more fitting for them to ponder the graves into which they will disappear some day, the soil under which their bodies will lie, and the grip from which they will never be able to escape.

God Almighty could easily have granted His Apostle (pbuh) a station above those who are subject to death and its torments. However, it is a manifestation of the divine wisdom that having to drink this cup to the dregs has remained the fate of every one of us, no matter how close one happens to be to God, in order that all of us might live in the awareness of God's oneness and the realization that every creature in heaven and on earth will, sooner or later, come before the Most Gracious One as a lowly servant. Given that the Messenger of God (pbuh) himself lived subject to this law of mortality, no one has the right to elevate himself above the level of humble servitude to God; and given that God's beloved (pbuh) suffered both death and the anguish which precedes it, no one can afford not to contemplate death and the sufferings which attend it.

This message is expressed clearly in the words of God Almighty, "Indeed, you are bound to die, (O Muhammad,) and indeed, they, too, are bound to die" (Qur'an 39: 30); and, "(Remind those who deny you, O Prophet, that) We did not grant any man before you eternity (on earth), so if you die, would they be eternal? Every soul will taste death; and We test you (all) with evil and with good (things of life) by way of trial; and to Us you will be returned" (Qur'an 21: 34-35).

Hence, this final phase of the Prophet's life brings us before two unchanging realities which are the foundations of faith in God Almighty; in fact, they are the foundations of all universal truth, namely, (1) the oneness of God Almighty, and (2) the attitude of submission and servanthood for which God has given all human beings an innate propensity.

Let us now present an overview of the lessons and judgments contained in this study:

One: Islam judges no one superior to anyone else except on the basis of good works. Zayd Ibn Harithah, father of Usamah, had at one time been a slave; moreover, as we have had occasion to mention, Usamah was no more than 20 years of age when the Prophet (pbuh) appointed him commander of the Muslim army. Hence, neither his young age nor the fact that his father had once been a slave prevented the Messenger of God (pbuh) from placing him in a position of leadership over his Companions in a major military expedition. The hypocrites made no secret of their astonishment and disapproval of this decision; however, the Islamic law judges such an action to be neither peculiar nor blameworthy. For in fact, Islam came to shatter the standards on the basis of which those in pre-Islamic times had distinguished among themselves, judging some to be superior, and others inferior.

The Prophet (pbuh) may have seen in Usamah some quality which uniquely qualified him to command the Muslim army on this campaign. Be that as it may, the Muslims' sole duty in this situation was to give Usamah their complete allegiance and obedience, even if he had been an Ethiopian slave. Consequently, the first thing which Abu Bakr did after becoming Caliph was to rescue Usamah's army. As Abu Bakr was seeing the army off, he was on foot while Usamah sat mounted on a steed. Seeing this, Usamah said, "O Caliph of the Messenger of the God, you ride and I will walk!" Abu Bakr replied, "You will not dismount, nor will I ride. Is it not my duty to get my feet dirty even for one hour for God's sake?" Later, Usamah

returned victorious from this expedition, and Abu Bakr's decision to help Usamah's army brought great benefit to the Muslims.[416]

Two: The legitimacy and merit of the use of incantations. The word "incantation" refers here to the recitation of Qur'anic verses, the repetition of the names of God, and so forth for the purpose of bringing protection from evil. Evidence for the legitimacy of this practice may be found in the hadith narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari according to which, when the Prophet's suffering grew worse, he would blow on himself while reciting certain chapters of the Qur'an and rubbing himself with his hand.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to employ the same treatment with his Companions, repeating passages from the Qur'an, the names of God, words of praise, prayers of supplication, and so forth. Muslim narrates on the authority of A'ishah that, "If anyone had a physical complaint, the Messenger of God (pbuh) would stroke him with his right hand, then say, 'The ailment has been removed by the Lord of all humankind. You are the Healer; there is no healing which does not originate with You, and Your healing is perfect.'" Muslim and al-Bukhari also narrate on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, that when the Prophet (pbuh) suffered from some ailment, he would recite Qur'anic verses and utter prayers for protection while blowing on himself. She says, "When his pain grew worse, I used to recite to him and stroke him with his own hand in hopes that it would be a greater source of blessing than my own hand would have been." One of the most straightforward texts in support of this practice is the Qur'anic verse which reads, "And We send down of the Qur'an all that gives health and is a mercy for the believers, but it increases the wrongdoers in nothing but loss" (Qur'an 17: 82).

The difference between an incantation and a prayer of supplication is that when reciting an incantation, one also engages in rubbing with the hand and blowing with the mouth. Malik, al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, Ishaq, and Abu Thawr hold that it is permissible to receive remuneration for the administration of incantations; in a detailed treatment of the matter, Abu Hanifah holds that one may accept remuneration for incantations, but not for teaching the Qur'an.[417] Evidence in favor of this view is found in the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim according to which, while some of the Companions were on a journey, they passed through a settlement of Arabs from whom they requested hospitality, but received none. The same people then asked the Companions, "Is there someone among you who knows how to administer incantations? Our chieftain is injured, or has been bitten." One of the Companions replied that he could do this, so he came and treated the wounded leader with an incantation based on the first chapter of the Qur'an, and the man recovered. In return for his service, the Companion was given a flock of sheep, but he refused to accept it. He later mentioned the incident to the Prophet (pbuh), saying, "O Messenger of God, all I did was recite the first chapter of the Qur'an!" The Prophet (pbuh) smiled and said, "Yes, but what you did was to administer a healing incantation. So take the remuneration they have offered you, and let me have a share of it."

In sum, al-Nawawi, al-Hafié Ibn Hajar, and others report that there is unanimous agreement among scholars on the legitimacy of the use of incantations provided that the following three conditions are met: (1) that it involve recitation of the Book of God or the mention of His names and attributes, (2) that it be done either in Arabic or in some other language which is comprehensible to people other than the one doing the recitation, and (3) that those involved believe that the effects of the incantation have their origin not in the incantation itself, but in God.[418] Evidence for the validity of these three conditions is found in sound hadiths such as the one narrated by Muslim on the authority of 'Awf Ibn Malik al-Ashja'i, who said, "We used to recite incantations in the pre-Islamic era, so we said, 'O Messenger of God, what do you think of this?' He replied, 'Let me hear the incantations you were using. There is nothing objectionable about an incantation provided that it does not involve the ascription of divinity to any being but God.'"

Sorcery and the use of incantations to reverse its effects

One of the main things for which the Prophet (pbuh) treated himself with incantations was the spell which was cast on him by Labid Ibn al-A'sam, the account of which is found in a hadith narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari. Scholars note that the majority of Muslims agree that sorcery is a concrete reality, the evidence for this being: (1) the aforementioned hadith, (2) explicit mention of sorcery in the Qur'an, and (3) the fact that it is something which can be learned. We read in the Qur'an concerning sorcery: "And they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife" (Qur'an 2: 102), where causing discord between a husband and a wife is easily recognized as a phenomenon with concrete reality.

Some may find difficulty accepting what we are saying for two reasons: (1) Considering sorcery to have real effects in the world is viewed by some as inconsistent with the belief in the oneness of God, one consequence of which is that all effects are, ultimately, attributable to God alone; and (2) If we say that a spell was cast on the Messenger of God (pbuh), this detracts from his dignified station as a prophet and may cause people to doubt his prophethood.

However, acknowledging the reality of sorcery need not be seen as problematic. The reply to the first objection above lies in the fact that considering sorcery to be a reality does not mean that it has effects which are independent of all other causes. For example, when we say that poison, or medicine, has a real, verifiable effect, these are statements which no one would deny. However, the effect caused by such substances is subject, ultimately, to the power of God alone. Concerning sorcery, God Almighty says, "But they do not harm anyone through it (i.e., through sorcery) except by permission of God" (Qur'an 2: 102). Hence, God himself declares that sorcery can exercise no effect which is independent of all other causes and factors; at the same time, however, He affirms that it has outcomes and effects which are subject to divine permission.

As for the answer to the second objection, it consists in the fact that the spell which was cast on the Prophet (pbuh) affected only his body, not his mind, his heart, or his beliefs. The effects which he suffered were like those he would have suffered as a result of any physical illness to which the human body is subject. Moreover, as you are aware, the divine protection which the Apostle (pbuh) enjoyed did not require that he be immune to illnesses and the various symptoms which they may cause.

Al-Qadi 'Iyad states,

As for the message conveyed by the hadith to the effect that it used to appear to him (pbuh) that he was doing something when, in fact, he was not doing it, this does not detract in the least from the degree to which or the manner in which he delivered the divine revelation or carried out the divine law, since there is ample evidence, as well as unanimous agreement among Muslims, that he enjoyed protection from failure in both of these two vital tasks. However, such hadiths have to do with worldly matters which had nothing to do with the mission which he had been sent to fulfill or those virtues because of which he was granted special divine favor. For in matters such as these, he was subject to difficulties just as all other human beings are. Hence, it should come as no surprise to us that in connection with such earthly matters, he might have imagined things to be other than they were, only to perceive them with clarity at a later time.[419]

A sick person suffering from a high fever may have hallucinations or inaccurate perceptions, and this is a human phenomenon in which God's apostles and prophets share equally with all other human beings. However, the account of the Prophet's having been a victim of sorcery may be classed among the miracles with which God blessed him (pbuh). Far from reflecting some failing on the Prophet's part, this incident serves as further evidence of the way in which God honored and protected him (pbuh). For when the Messenger of God (pbuh) began to experience such bodily symptoms, he continued praying for divine assistance until God disclosed to him the intrigue which had been plotted against him by Labid Ibn al-A'sam. Once he knew what had happened, the Prophet (pbuh) went to the place where Labid had hidden his combs and other sorcerer's paraphernalia and he neutralized everything he found.

The following account of the incident is narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, who said: A spell was cast on the Messenger of God (pbuh) by Labid Ibn al-A'sam of the tribe of Banu Zurayq. As a result, the Messenger of God (pbuh) would imagine that he had done something when he really had not. This might happen even when he was with me. However, he prayed and prayed about the matter. Then one day he said to me, "A'ishah, do you believe that God has given me the answer which I sought from Him? I was visited by two men, one of whom sat at my head, and the other at my feet. Then they had the following conversation:

One of them asked the other, 'What ails this man?'

His companion replied, 'A spell has been cast on him.'

'Who did this?' asked the first.

'Labid Ibn al-A'sam,' he answered.

"What instruments did he use?'

'A comb, the hair that came out when the comb was used, and the bracts[420] enclosing the inflorescence of a male palm tree.'

'And where is he?'

'At the Well of Dharwan.'"

Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) went to the well with some of his Companions. When he returned, said, "A'ishah, the water was so red, it looked as though henna had been soaked in it. And the tops of the palm trees looked like the heads of demons!"

"O Messenger of God!" I said, "why did you not bring him (Labid) out?"

He replied, "God has healed me, so I did not wish to incite people against him."

After this, he (pbuh) gave instructions for the well to be filled in.

As you can see, rather than serving as evidence of harm which afflicted his body or some other aspect of his humanity, this hadith simply reveals the honor and protection which God granted His Apostle (pbuh).

Someone might still ask: How is one to distinguish, then, between a divine miracle and sorcery, so long as its effects are real? The answer to this question is that the miracles which were performed by the Prophet (pbuh) were accompanied by his claim to prophethood and the challenge to ponder them as evidence of the veracity of his claim. However, sorcery could never produce its effects if it were performed by someone merely claiming to be a prophet.[421] In addition, the power of sorcery is limited; for although, as we have said, its effects are real, they do not go beyond certain limits. In other words, sorcery is incapable of altering the essences of things; it is for this reason that God describes the sorcery which was performed by Pharaoh's sorcerers by saying, "And suddenly, their ropes and staffs seemed to him of their sorcery to be

moving rapidly" (Qur'an 20: 66). God describes what Moses saw as an apparition, or illusion; that is, their sorcery did not actually turn the ropes into snakes; rather, it affected the eyesight of those looking on. This is clarified by another verse in which God says, "They bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them, and they presented a great (feat of) magic" (Qur'an 7: 116). Consequently, there is no contradiction between our saying that sorcery is real, and the words of God Almighty, "Their (magic) ropes and staffs seemed to him (Moses) to be moving rapidly." For the transformation of ropes into snakes crawling along the ground was an illusion; however, people's eyes being affected by this illusion and their inability to discern reality was the effect of sorcery. These Qur'anic verses make clear that the locus of sorcery's effects is always people's bodies, senses, and limbs, on account of which some visible objects appear to be other than what they actually are.

Three: Examples of Abu Bakr's merit and virtue. The aforementioned account of the Prophet's illness provides us with four illustrations of the special merit which Abu Bakr enjoyed before God. The first of these may be seen in Abu Bakr's response to the words with which the Messenger of God (pbuh) commenced his farewell address, saying, "(There is) a servant to whom God has given a choice between the best this world can offer and what is with God, and he has chosen what is with God." Realizing what the Prophet (pbuh) meant, Abu Bakr burst into tears and cried, "Let our mothers and fathers be your ransom!" Of all those listening, Abu Bakr was the only person who recognized that in these words, the Prophet (pbuh) was referring to himself. There is a version of the same hadith passed down on the authority of Sa'id al-Khudri in which al-Khudri states that when Abu Bakr wept over what the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, he thought to himself, "Why should this venerable man be in tears simply because the Messenger of God (pbuh) is telling us about someone who was given a choice, then chose? However, the fact is that the Messenger of God (pbuh) was himself this person, and of all of us gathered there, Abu Bakr had known him the best."

Secondly, we have the words of the Messenger of God (pbuh): "No one has ever given to me more unstintingly of his wealth or his friendship than Abu Bakr..." (to the end of the hadith). Indeed, we have no record of the Prophet (pbuh) having uttered such timeless words about anyone but Abu Bakr, may he enjoy God's good pleasure.

The third illustration is found in Muslim's narrative on the authority of A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, according to which the Prophet (pbuh) said to her, "Call for Abu Bakr, your father and your brother, so that I can draw up a written statement (designating him as my successor). I fear that some other person with aspirations to leadership will say, 'I am more worthy.' However, God and the believers will have no one but Abu Bakr." This hadith may be viewed as the definitive text concerning the Messenger of God's appointment of Abu Bakr as his successor. Hence, given that it was ordained by the divine wisdom that the Messenger of God (pbuh) should not, in fact, hold his Companions to such a commitment or draw up such a written statement for them, the sole purpose for this was to prevent the caliphate from becoming a position which is simply transferred on the basis of heredity – a precedent which, had it been established, would have led to a failure to require Muslim rulers to live up to mandatory standards of righteousness and the inevitable consequence of such a failure, namely, corruption of power.

As for the fourth illustration, it may be seen in the appointment of Abu Bakr to lead the congregational prayers in his (pbuh) place. We have noted the Prophet's adamancy in his appointment of Abu Bakr to this task, as evidenced by his sharp reaction to A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, when she questioned this decision. Be that as it may, it is the superior qualities recorded of Abu Bakr in the sound hadiths

concerning him which favored the possibility that the Muslims would, in fact, be willing to pledge their allegiance to him as caliph after the Prophet's death. At the same time, however, this does not detract in the least from the superior qualities exhibited by the other companions and caliphs, especially 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him. As you will recall from the account of the Battle of Khaybar, the Prophet (pbuh) said of 'Ali, "Tomorrow I shall give this standard to a man who loves God and His Apostle." That night people went back to their campsites wondering who it was that would be given the standard, and the next day they learned that it was 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him.

The question concerning the caliphate was thus settled by the Muslims following the Prophet's death without any divisions or conflicts among them beyond the study and discussion which such a process would necessarily require; as for Abu Bakr and 'Ali, may God be pleased with them, each of them continued to be a witness to the other's virtue. Hence, now that nearly fourteen centuries have passed since these events, it would be foolishness and a waste of time for us to stir up resentments and hatred by reopening the discussion of which of the two was more worthy of the caliphate, especially given the fact that those directly concerned with the matter exhibited no such antagonism toward one another but, on the contrary, continued to live in a spirit of love and solidarity till they went to meet their Lord.

Four: The prohibition against situating mosques over or around tombs. The tone of the hadith dealing with this practice indicates the seriousness of the prohibition against it. Some scholars note that the Prophet (pbuh) warned against using his tomb or anyone else's as the site for a place of worship in order to prevent people from going to excess in their veneration of him, knowing that this type of practice among many bygone nations had led them down the path of falsehood and unbelief. The practice being referred to here would involve either the construction of a mosque over the tomb, making the area around the tomb into a place of prayer, or praying at the tomb itself. With respect to the practice of praying at tombs, some Muslim scholars hold that it should be forbidden entirely, while others judge it to be merely undesirable. Those who judge it to be undesirable hold that it is particularly undesirable if the tomb falls between the qiblah and the person praying; however, similar to the ruling on prayers performed on land which has been taken by force, such a prayer remains valid, at least.

Imam al-Nawawi states, "When the number of Muslims increased to the point where the Companions, may God be pleased with them, and their Successors after them, needed to expand the mosque of the Messenger of God (pbuh), the expansion encroached upon the residences of the Prophet's wives, including A'ishah's quarters, where the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his two Companions, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, were buried. Hence, they built high, round walls around the tomb so that it would not be visible inside the mosque, thereby preventing the common people from praying to it. In addition, they built adjoining walls around the two southern corners of the tomb so that no one would be able to take the tomb as a qiblah."[422]

Five: What the Prophet (pbuh) felt as he experienced the pangs of death. One can get a sense of what the Messenger of God (pbuh) was feeling and the direction in which his thoughts and concerns were tending as he approached death based on the account of his final appearance in the mosque:

As the Muslims were lined up for prayer in the early dawn hours of Monday, 12 Rabi' I, 11 A.H., the curtain drawn over the entrance to A'ishah's quarters was parted and the Messenger of God (pbuh) emerged. As he looked at the worshippers standing in rows for the congregational prayer, he broke into a smile and laughed. Thinking that the Messenger of God (pbuh) wished to come out and pray with them, Abu Bakr stepped back to join the row of worshippers behind him, and they were all so overjoyed to see him (pbuh), they nearly stopped praying. As for the Prophet (pbuh), he motioned with his hand in such a way as to say: Carry on! Then he went back into A'ishah's room and closed the curtain behind him.

Hence, his thoughts were focused at this time on his people and the condition in which they would find

themselves after he was gone. The smile on his face as he looked at his Companions standing reverently before God Almighty bespeaks the great love for them which filled his heart, the supplications which he uttered on their behalf, and his longing to be with them.

As he spent his last moments on earth, the Messenger of God (pbuh) wished to cast a final glance at his Companions, may God be pleased with them all. He wished to reassure himself concerning the truth which he had left with them and the guidance with which he had provided them. In response, God granted him a sight which brought such joy to his soul that the pangs of death that had gripped his body were subdued, and his face shone with such gladness and contentment that his Companions thought he had recovered from his illness.

However, they would discover in the end that he (pbuh) had stood gazing at them in this manner only to revert once again to the throes of death. God decreed in His wisdom that the final image to be recorded in his mind of his Companions and, indeed, of his entire nation, would be the image of his people in prayer. It was this image which would serve as the connecting link between the moment in which he bade farewell to his people on earth and the moment in which he would receive them in the hereafter at the Pool. This image was the embodiment of their lasting covenant – a covenant which he (pbuh) bequeathed to them (and to us) with contentment and a smile!

A Brief History
Of the Righly Guided Caliphate

The Caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq

After the death of the Messenger of God (pbuh), the Muslims gathered in the roofed gallery belonging to Banu Sa'idah and consulted concerning who should succeed the Prophet (pbuh) in leading the Muslims and supervising their affairs. After discussing the matter and reviewing a number of proposals, they agreed that the first successor to the Messenger of God (pbuh) should be the one who had been leading the Muslims in prayer during the Prophet's illness, namely, Abu Bakr, his most faithful friend and the one who had been his companion and support in the cave (where he sought refuge from his persecutors in Mecca). 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him, did not oppose this consensus; as for the delay in his pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr and recognizing him as caliph, it had to do with the difference which arose between Abu Bakr and Fatimah, may God be pleased with them both, over the matter of her inheritance from the Messenger of God (pbuh).[423]

Abu Bakr's Most Important Accomplishments as Caliph

One: As soon as Abu Bakr was established as caliph, he issued marching orders to Usamah's army, which had halted at a site near Medina known as "Dhu Khashab" when Usamah received news that the Prophet (pbuh) was ill. In so doing, Abu Bakr discounted the views of those who preferred to keep the army in its place in view of the spread of apostasy in some of its ranks, as well as those who favored replacing Usamah with someone else.

The Righteous Caliph, may God be pleased with him, set out on foot to bid farewell to Usamah and his army, and when Usamah wanted to get off his horse and let Abu Bakr ride in his place, Abu Bakr replied, "You will not dismount, nor will I ride!" He then instructed the soldiers not to engage in treachery, not to place anyone in shackles, not to mutilate the enemy's slain, not to kill young children, women or the elderly, not to set fire to date palms or cut down other trees, and not to slaughter she-goats or camels for any purpose other than to provide nourishment for themselves. He also told them, "If you come across people who have devoted themselves to worship in cloisters, leave them in peace."

Then he said to Usamah, "With your consent, I would like to keep 'Umar with me so as to seek his counsel with regard to the Muslims' affairs."

"Let it be as you wish," Usamah replied.

Usamah then marched out, and whenever he came to a tribe in which apostasy had spread, he restored them to allegiance to Islam. One reason for his success in accomplishing this task is that people's hearts were full of awe and dread, since they reasoned that if the Muslims were not overwhelmingly powerful, they would not have sent an army out against the Byzantines at such a time. When Usamah later brought his army to the land of the Byzantines where his father had been killed, he waged war on them and returned victorious.[424]

Two: He equipped armies to wage war on apostates and those forbidding others to pay zakah. Toward this end, Abu Bakr formed eleven brigades and gave instructions to the commander of each brigade to head in a different direction, while he himself led a brigade to Dhu al-Qassah. However, 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, implored Abu Bakr to come back. Grasping the reins of Abu Bakr's camel, he said to him, "O Caliph of the Messenger of God! I say to you what the Messenger of God said on the day of the Battle of Uhud: Put away your sword and allow us to enjoy your presence among us! For I swear, if the Muslims are stricken by your loss at this time, they will never recover from the blow." So Abu Bakr came back and placed his brigade under someone else's command.[425]

With the victory which God granted the Muslims, the apostasy was rooted out, Islam became firmly established throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and its tribes submitted to the payment of the zakah.

Three: Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, sent Khalid Ibn al-Walid to Iraq, and with him al-Muthanná Ibn Harithah al-Shaybani, who conquered numerous territories and brought back spoils from their expeditions.

Four: After the aforementioned steps had been taken, Abu Bakr began to consider the possibility of invading Byzantium. He gathered the Companions and consulted with them concerning the matter, and they supported him in his opinion. Then he turned to 'Ali and said, "And what do you think, Abu al-

Hasan?"

`Ali replied, "I believe that you will be blessed with victory in this enterprise, God willing."

Reassured by 'Ali's response, Abu Bakr decided to move forward in the execution of his plans. He first gathered the people and addressed them, urging them to be willing to engage in jihad. Then he wrote letters to his governors instructing them to present themselves before him, and large numbers of volunteers came forward from the various tribes. Abu Bakr formed brigades and appointed commanders over them, then sent them to Syria in succession, placing Abu 'Ubaydah in command over the entire army.

Whenever a commander was about to go forth, Abu Bakr would bid him farewell with instructions to be mindful of God, to be a faithful companion to those in his charge, to be devoted to the performance of the congregational prayers at their appointed times, and to live a life of righteousness so that God might reform others through his example. In addition, he ordered them to show respect to the couriers sent to them by the enemy, but to minimize the time they spent in the Muslims' camp lest they gather information about the Muslims and divulge it to the enemy.

The Muslim fighters made their way to Byzantine territory, then gathered in Yarmuk. Once they had arrived and seen what a large army the Byzantines had amassed, they sent word to this effect to Abu Bakr, who in turn sent word to Khalid Ibn al-Walid in Iraq, instructing him to take half of the Muslim army stationed in Iraq to Syria in order to provide support for the army under Abu 'Ubaydah's command. He ordered him to leave the remaining half of the army under the command of al-Muthanná Ibn Harithah and to take over command of all the armies in Syria as soon as he arrived there.

Khalid then marched until he reached the Muslims in Syria, and he wrote a letter to Abu 'Ubaydah, saying,

I ask God to grant both of us safety on the Day of Fear and protection from all harm in this world. I have received a letter from the Caliph of the Messenger of God instructing me to march to Syria and take command of the Muslim armies there. I swear to God, this was not my request or even my wish. For you are as you have always been, and we shall not disobey or oppose you or make any decisions without your word of agreement.

When Abu 'Ubaydah read the letter from Khalid, he said, "God bless the Caliph of the Messenger of God for this decision, and may He grant long life to Khalid for what he has done!" Abu Bakr had also written a letter to Abu 'Ubaydah saying,

I have placed Khalid in command over the Muslim army in Syria; hence, do not oppose him in anything, but rather, listen to him and obey him. For believe me, O brother of mine, I have not sent him in authority over you because I consider him superior to you; rather, I believe he possesses an intuitive understanding of how war should be waged in this critical location, and God desires blessing and peace for both you and us.

Then the Muslims and the Byzantines met and the battle was joined. A series of battles were fought, with the final outcome being a victory for the Muslims. An untold number of Byzantines were killed, and a large number of them were taken captive as well.

Meanwhile, Khalid Ibn al-Walid received a letter informing him that Abu Bakr had died and that the caliphate had been passed on to 'Umar. The letter also included instructions for Khalid to be removed as commander of the army and to have Abu 'Ubaydah restored to his post. Khalid was pleased with the news, as he did not wish to see turmoil in the Muslim ranks; when the news reached Abu 'Ubaydah, he was pleased as well, and for this reason, he informed no one of the matter.[426]

Abu Bakr's death and the transfer of the caliphate to 'Umar

Abu Bakr died on a Tuesday night, seven days before the end of Jumadá II, 13 A.H., and he was buried in A'ishah's quarters next to the Prophet (pbuh). He lived to be 63 years old, and when he died he had served as caliph for two years, three months, and three days. Shortly before he died, Abu Bakr consulted with a group of the leading Companions whose opinions were held in high regard, and they agreed that he should pass on the caliphate to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Abu Bakr was thus the first caliph to designate a particular man as his successor.

It may be helpful here to say a few words on this point. Al-Tabari, Ibn al-Jawzi, and Ibn Kathir mention that Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, was concerned that after his death, the Muslims might not be able to reach agreement amongst themselves about who his successor should be. Hence, when his illness began to grow worse, he called upon them to begin searching for a caliph to succeed him, wanting this process to take place during his lifetime and with his knowledge.

However, the Muslims were unable to reach agreement on who should be Abu Bakr's successor during this short period of time, so they placed the decision back in his hands, saying, "We will abide by whatever decision you make." Abu Bakr then began consulting with the most prominent Companions, each one individually, and when he saw that they all agreed on 'Umar's worthiness and merit, he went out to the people and informed them that he had spared no effort to choose a successor who would serve their best interests, and that he had decided to appoint 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab caliph after him. In response, they said, "We will gladly listen to him and obey him."[427]

On what basis did ‘Umar become caliph?

There are some who may believe that this method of appointing the caliph was based entirely on the choice of a single person rather than on consultation (shurá), which relies on deliberations with those Muslims qualified to make and revoke decisions of this nature. However, if we look more closely, we will see that in essence, this process did involve consultation with those qualified to make and revoke decisions relating to the Muslim leadership. For in fact, Abu Bakr did not appoint anyone as his successor until after he had sought the counsel and advice of the most prominent Companions, all of whom held ‘Umar in high regard and vouched for his merit and qualifications. Even after this, his appointment of ‘Umar did not go into effect until after he had addressed the Companions and asked them to respect and obey ‘Umar, to which they all replied that they were quite willing to do so, and after the Muslims had – following Abu Bakr’s death – reached agreement concerning the validity of the appointment Abu Bakr had made. This, then, was evidence of the unanimous consent given to the new Muslim leadership, which was established through the appointment of a successor based on the conditions laid down in Islamic law.[428]

Abu Bakr's letter of appointment to 'Umar

In the month of Jumadá II, 13 A.H., after Abu Bakr had received the Companions' unanimous approval of his appointment of 'Umar, he called for 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan and dictated to him the following letter:

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace: This is the testament set forth by Abu Bakr, Caliph of the Messenger of God during his final days on earth and in anticipation of his entry into the hereafter – as he endures that condition in which even the denier of the truth believes, and which causes even the disobedient to be certain of the truth: I hereby commission as your leader 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab. If he exercises forbearance and justice, this is what I would expect of him based on my knowledge of his character. If, on the other hand, he follows a path of injustice and caprice, then I have no claim to knowledge of that which has yet to be revealed. Whichever transpires, every one of us will be rewarded according to what he has done, and "...those who do wrong will come to know by what overturning they will be overturned!" (Qur'an 26: 227)

Then he placed his seal on the letter and 'Uthman took it out and read it to the people. When they had heard the letter, the people pledged their allegiance to 'Umar.

Events which took place during Abu Bakr's caliphate and the facts to which they point

The events we have discussed from the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, point to a number of lessons and principles which we summarize as follows:

One: Abu Bakr became caliph though consultation, or shurá, and those who participated in this process included all of the Prophet's Companions, among them 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him. What this indicates is that no text in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah granted the caliphate to any particular person. If such a text existed, there would have been no place for shurá, since the Companions would have had no right to bypass what was set forth in the Qur'an or the Sunnah and replace it with their own personal convictions or what they had agreed upon amongst themselves.

Two: The differences of opinion which surfaced in the meeting place of Banu Sa'idah as the senior Companions discussed the matter of who should be caliph were a perfectly natural, indeed, inevitable consequence of their having set forth the issue of the caliphate for discussion and deliberation. This phenomenon serves as clear evidence of the fact that when there exists no explicit text in the Qur'an or the Sunnah on a given matter, the plurality of opinions which are expressed in the course of the resulting discussions are not to be suppressed or limited in any way. In fact, the only means by which the truth can be arrived at concerning matters about which the Qur'an and the Sunnah are silent is to set forth more than one opinion, then to discuss the points of view proposed in a spirit of objectivity, freedom, and honesty.

If the Companions, may God's favor rest upon them, had found themselves with only a single choice before them, after which they had been expected to put this "choice" to a vote, then disband having agreed upon it, it would have been a genuine catastrophe, for the resulting "consultation" would have been nothing but a sham, and the agreement at which they arrived would have been a result of external coercion. As for those who accuse Islam of being dictatorial and claim to want to apply the principle of shurá, one finds that when they actually witness a living example of this practice, they refer to it – either out of genuine ignorance or in an attempt to evade acknowledging what they see – as conflict and disunity! Hence, I ask: What sort of shurá do they have in mind? What would it look like, and how would it work?

Three: The advice which 'Ali gave to Abu Bakr not to go out himself to fight the apostates for fear of what might befall the Muslim community were Abu Bakr to suffer harm testifies eloquently to the great love which 'Ali felt for Abu Bakr, and to his unwavering conviction that Abu Bakr was, in fact, worthy to be the Messenger of God's successor and to lead the Muslim community; it also indicates the extent of the cooperation and allegiance which existed between them.

Moreover, whatever one might say about 'Ali's tardiness to pledge his allegiance to Abu Bakr as caliph and whatever disagreements there may be over how long this delay lasted, none of this stands in contradiction to what we have just noted about the mutual loyalty and cooperation between the two men. It is a known fact that 'Ali's delay in officially recognizing Abu Bakr as caliph was a means of mollifying Fatimah, may God be pleased with her, who felt strongly that she should be able to inherit from her father, the Messenger of God, as any other female would inherit from her father. However, the delay was certainly not due to any resentment on 'Ali's part toward Abu Bakr; otherwise, what reason would he have had to act with such love and passionate concern for him?

Four: No Muslim can reflect on the stance taken by Abu Bakr toward the apostate tribes or the unyielding determination which set him apart from the other Companions – most, indeed, all of whom failed in the beginning to muster the same resolve – without glimpsing the divine wisdom which placed the right man at the right time before the right task. It is inconceivable that any of the other Companions would have been more worthy than Abu Bakr to stand in the face of that storm, then send it back whence it had come. Even 'Umar, who was known for his sternness and unflinching resolve, fell short of the strength which was demonstrated by Abu Bakr on this particular occasion. Who, then, can see this dazzling divine wisdom at work, then blame history and those who lived it for submitting themselves to the authority of this self-same wisdom?

Five: Based on the example of Abu Bakr and his assignment of the caliphate to 'Umar, some people may think that merely by appointing a successor it is possible to ensure the continuation of stable government and leadership. However, this is not the case; rather, no Muslim leader can be established in power until his appointment has been presented for approval to the Muslim community and this community has declared its acceptance of the new leader. Hence, if Abu Bakr had appointed 'Umar caliph after him but had not obtained the approval of the Muslim community, this appointment would have been worthless. As we have mentioned above, 'Umar's appointment to the caliphate was based on a kind of tacit shurá which was made manifest through the Companions' endorsement of the person Abu Bakr had chosen for them.

The caliphate of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab

Commander of the faithful ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, whom the Messenger of God (pbuh) granted the epithet, al-Faruq, or, “the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood,” took over the caliphate on the same day Abu Bakr the Righteous died. During his term as caliph, ‘Umar followed the same path of struggle and patient endurance for God’s sake that his predecessor had pursued, and Islam flourished. The first thing ‘Umar did as caliph was to remove Khalid Ibn al-Walid from his post as commander of the Muslim army in Syria and to restore Abu ‘Ubaydah to the same. After witnessing the conquest of Jerusalem, ‘Umar remained in the city for ten days, after which he returned to Medina, taking Khalid with him. When Khalid took him to task for the way he had treated him, ‘Umar replied, “Believe me, Khalid, you have been most gracious toward me, and you are dear to my heart!”[429] He also sent letters to the various provinces and cities under the rule of Islam, saying, “I did not remove Khalid from his post due to any ill will between us or any disloyalty on his part. Rather, I took this action out of concern for those who might be negatively affected by the swiftness of his attacks and the intensity of his blows.”[430] Khalid, who was the son of ‘Umar’s maternal aunt, died during ‘Umar’s caliphate in the city of Homs.[431]

Damascus was conquered in part by force and in part through a peace treaty; both Homs and Ba‘labakk were conquered peacefully, while al-Basrah and al-Ubullah[432] were conquered by force. All of these conquests took place in the year 14 A.H. During this same year, ‘Umar gathered the Muslims for the tarawih[433] prayers, consisting of twenty cycles of prayer.

In the year 15 A.H., all of Jordan was conquered by force except for Tiberias, which was conquered peacefully; it was in this same year that the battles of al-Yarmuk and al-Qadisiyah took place. Ibn Jarir (al-Tabari) states in his History, “It was at this time that Sa‘d (Ibn Abi Waqqas) founded the city of Kufah in Iraq. In addition, ‘Umar established regular salaries for those in his employ, he set up an official governmental apparatus responsible for the army and fighters’ wages, and he distributed war spoils among those entitled to them, giving priority to those who had been Muslims for a longer time.”[434]

In the year 16 A.H., al-Ahwaz and al-Mada’in were conquered, and it was there that Sa‘d led congregational prayer in Khosrau’s palace; this was also the first congregational prayer to be prayed in Iraq. ‘Umar consulted with the Companions, including ‘Ali, concerning whether he should go out himself to fight against the Persians and the Byzantines. ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, replied,

An expedition of this sort will not succeed because of our great numbers, nor will it fail because our numbers are small. Rather, it is God who will grant victory to His religion, and it is God’s army which was prepared and equipped until it became what it is now and reached the places it has reached. As for the person who leads such an expedition, he is like the knot which holds a string of pearls in place. If the knot is broken, the pearls will be scattered and can never again be strung together in their entirety. So be an axis which is secured in its place, and manage the Arabs’ affairs from where you are, setting them ablaze with the flames of war. For if you depart from this land, the Arabs will rise up against you from all quarters, and the shame which you leave in your wake will be greater than the good you now possess.[435]

The year 16 A.H. witnessed the battle of Jalula’ in which Yazdajird, son of Khosrau, was defeated and retreated to al-Riyy. Takrit also was conquered, and ‘Umar conquered Jerusalem, then delivered in

Jabiyah his famous public address. Qinnisrin was conquered by force, while Aleppo, Antioch, and Manbij were conquered peacefully. In the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal of the same year, the history of events since the Prophet’s emigration to Medina was recorded under the guidance of ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him.

In the year 17 A.H., ‘Umar expanded the Prophet’s mosque in Medina. This same year witnessed a severe drought, so ‘Umar prayed to God for rain on behalf of the people, seeking the mediation of al-‘Abbas, and the drought was lifted. Ibn Sa‘d narrates that when ‘Umar went out to pray for rain, he was wearing the Messenger of God’s outer garment. In the same year, al-Ahwaz was conquered peacefully.[436]

The Plague of ‘Amwas

In the year 18 A.H., Syria was stricken by a plague which took the lives of many of the Muslim soldiers. News of the plague reached ‘Umar as he was on his way to Syria for the second time. When he consulted with the Companions concerning whether to proceed on his journey, they disagreed among themselves at first. However, ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf then stepped forward and informed them that the Prophet (pbuh) had once said, “If you hear of a plague in some country, do not go there, and if a plague afflicts a country where you are, do not flee elsewhere.” Hence, ‘Umar led his people back to Medina.

In the year 19 A.H., Caesarea was conquered by force. In the year 20 A.H., Egypt was conquered; according to some reports, it was conquered by force, and according to others, the entire country was conquered peacefully except for Alexandria. In the same year, Morocco was conquered by force; Caesar, ruler of the Byzantines, died; and ‘Umar expelled the Jews from Khaybar and Najran.

In the year 21 A.H., Alexandria and Nahawand were conquered by force, after which no community of non-Arabs remained there. In the year 22 A.H., Azerbaijan was conquered by force, though some say it was conquered peacefully; in addition, al-Daynur, Hamadan, Tripoli of the West, and al-Riyy were conquered by force. Then in the year 23 A.H., the remaining territories of Persia were conquered: Karaman, Sijistan, and Esfahan and its environs. At the end of the same year, ‘Umar performed the major pilgrimage. Sa‘id Ibn al-Musayyib states, “After ‘Umar departed from Miná, he had his camel stop and rest at al-Abtah. Then he rested himself and, raising his hands heavenward, he said, “O God, I am advanced in years, my strength is failing, and my subjects are scattered here and there. I pray that You would take me unto Yourself having performed the mission I was given without negligence or excessive zeal.” And before the end of Dhu al-Hijjah, 23 A.H., ‘Umar had been slain [437] Al-Bukhari narrates on the authority of Aslam that ‘Umar prayed, “O God, grant that I might die as a martyr for Your sake, and let it be in the land of Your Messenger!”

The Murder of ‘Umar, may God grant him His favor

‘Umar was killed by a Mazdian youth by the name of ‘Abd al-Mughirah, whose agnomen was “Abu Lu’lu’ah,” and who possessed numerous skills and trades. The reason for which he is said to have killed ‘Umar is that when he came to the caliph complaining that the land tax imposed on him was too high, the latter replied that his tax was not excessive. So he left angry, saying, “He is fair toward everyone but me!” After deciding to kill the caliph, he took a sharp, poisoned dagger, then lay in wait for ‘Umar in one corner of the mosque. When ‘Umar came out as he was accustomed to for the dawn prayer, ‘Abd al-Mughirah attacked him and stabbed him three times, causing him to fall but not die. Then he began stabbing everyone who came near him until someone threw a robe over him. When he saw that he would not be able to escape, he killed himself with his own dagger.[438]

This is the account given by narrators of how ‘Umar was assassinated. However, it seems unlikely that this crime would have resulted from nothing but a personal grudge over the land tax; hence, there may have been a multilateral conspiracy behind the murder involving a variety of Jewish, Mazdian, and other elements. Nevertheless, only God knows where the full truth lies.

When ‘Umar was told that his assailant was Abu Lu’lu’ah, he said, “Praise God that He did not cause my death to come about at the hands of one who claims to be a Muslim!” Then he turned to his son, ‘Abdullah, and said, “See how much outstanding debt I have.” So they calculated it and found it to be 86,000 dirhems. Then he said, “If the money owned by my own family is sufficient, pay the debt out of that. If not, ask Banu ‘Adi for assistance. If their money also is insufficient, ask for help from Quraysh.”

Then ‘Umar said to ‘Abdullah, “Go to A’ishah, mother of the faithful, and say to her: ‘Umar requests your permission to be buried together with his two companions (the Prophet (pbuh) and Abu Bakr).”

When ‘Abdullah presented A’ishah with ‘Umar’s request, she replied, “Actually, I wanted it – that is, the gravesite – for myself. However, I will give him preference over myself.”

When ‘Abdullah returned to ‘Umar with A’ishah’s reply, he gave thanks to God.

ʿUmar's appointment of his successor from among the members of the shurá council

Some of the Companions said to ʿUmar, "Appoint as your successor someone you consider fit for this responsibility." Instead, however, he placed the decision in the hands of a shurá council composed of six members: ʿUthman Ibn ʿAffan, ʿAli Ibn Abi Talib, Talhah Ibn ʿUbayd Allah, al-Zubayr Ibn al-ʿAwwam, Saʿd Ibn Abi Waqqas, and ʿAbd al-Rahman Ibn ʿAwf, may God be pleased with them. Hesitant to specify one of them as his successor, ʿUmar said, "Dead or alive, I am no longer fit to bear responsibility for your affairs. Hence, if God wills good for you, He will bring you to unanimity concerning which of you is the most fit to be caliph, just as He did after the death of your Prophet (pbuh)."

Hence, ʿUmar was the first to form the group of Companions which came to be referred to as Ahl al-Shurá, that is, those qualified to reach decisions concerning the welfare of the Muslim community through the process of consultation. As we have seen, ʿUmar assigned this group the task of deciding who would be caliph after him; in so doing, he formed what was equivalent to a supreme governing council.

ʿUmar instructed his son ʿAbdullah to attend the council meetings as a consultant and advisor, but not as a candidate for the caliphate. Meanwhile, he instructed Suhayb al-Rumi to lead the congregational prayers for three days until the consultation had been completed and the Muslims had reached a consensus on who would be their next caliph.

How ‘Uthman was chosen

The members of the shurá council that ‘Umar had appointed met together in someone’s house to consult on the matter, while Talhah stood guard at the door to prevent people from entering while they were still in session. Three of the council members then authorized the three others to reach a final decision: Al-Zubayr authorized ‘Ali, Sa‘d authorized ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf, and Talhah authorized ‘Uthman. ‘Abd al-Rahman then said to ‘Ali and ‘Uthman, “Which of you will waive his right to the caliphate so that we can commission the other to this post?”

Neither of the two men replied.

“I hereby waive my own claim,” said ‘Abd al-Rahman. “It is my duty before God and Islam to reach an informed decision concerning this matter and to assign the caliphate to whichever of you possesses a greater claim to it.”

“This is true,” the two of them replied.

After speaking to each of them concerning the merits he possessed, he had each of them promise that, if chosen as caliph, he would conduct his affairs with justice and fairness and that if his companion should be chosen instead, he would obey his every command. Both men promised to do as ‘Abd al-Rahman had bidden them, then they parted.

‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf then set about consulting with the people. Traveling all over, he sought the opinions of all their leaders and chieftains, meeting with them individually, in pairs, and in large groups, both in private and in public. He went to see the women who were secluded in their private quarters, he spoke with the young boys who were studying in the Qur’anic schools, and he inquired of the Bedouins and the caravans that came to the city. He continued with his inquiry for three days and nights, during which time he found that virtually everyone he encountered favored ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan. The only people who favored ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, were ‘Ammar Ibn Yasir and al-Miqdad; however, they later joined their voices with those of everyone else.

On the fourth day, ‘Abd al-Rahman met with ‘Ali and ‘Uthman in the house of his nephew, al-Miswar Ibn Makhramah, and he said to them, “I have asked people about the two of you, and I found no one who considers any other man to be on a par with either of you.” He then took the two men to the mosque and sent for the various notables of the community as well as the Emigrants and the Helpers. Before long, the mosque was filled to capacity, and ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf ascended the pulpit of the Messenger of God (pbuh) to address the people. After a long prayer of supplication, he said, “O people! I have asked you in private and in public concerning your hopes and desires, and in so doing, I found that none of you favored either of these two men, ‘Ali and ‘Uthman, over the other.”

Then turning to ‘Ali, he said, “Come here.”

‘Ali rose and came to ‘Abd al-Rahman, who took his hand and said, “Do you promise me (to undertake the duties of Caliph) on the basis of the Book of God, the Sunnah of His Prophet (pbuh), and the acts performed by Abu Bakr and ‘Umar?”

“No,” he replied. “I can only promise on the strength of my own efforts and capacities.”

ʿAbd al-Rahman then let go of ʿAli's hand and bid ʿUthman to come forward.

Taking ʿUthman's hand, he said, "Do you promise me (to undertake the duties of Caliph) on the basis of the Book of God, the Sunnah of His Prophet (pbuh), and the acts performed by Abu Bakr and ʿUmar?"

"Yes, I do," he replied.

Then, still holding ʿUthman's hand and looking toward the ceiling of the mosque, ʿAbd al-Rahman said, "O God, hear and bear witness! O God, hear and bear witness! O God, I hereby release myself from the trust that has been mine, and I pass it on to ʿUthman."

Everyone in the mosque then pressed around the pulpit, pledging their allegiance to ʿUthman. As for ʿAli, some say that he was the first to pledge his allegiance to ʿUthman, while others say that he was the last.[439]

Lessons and Principles

One: As we have seen, one of the first things which ʿUmar did as caliph was to remove Khalid Ibn al-Walid from his post as commander of the Muslim forces in Syria. Many modern-day writers have sought to exploit this dismissal as a disparagement of Khalid, may God be pleased with him. However, the explanation for this action by ʿUmar may be seen clearly through other decisions which he made, as well as through the things which he said about Khalid and the praise which he bestowed upon him. As noted above, ʿUmar told Khalid, "Believe me, Khalid, you have been most gracious toward me, and you are dear to my heart!" In addition, he sent letters to the various provinces and cities under the rule of Islam, saying, "I did not remove Khalid from his post due to any ill will between us or any disloyalty on his part. Rather, I took this action out of concern for those who might be negatively affected by the swiftness of his attacks and the intensity of his blows."[440]

When ʿUmar was informed that Khalid was ill, he was three days' march from the place where Khalid was. Nevertheless, he mounted his steed and covered the distance in a single night. When he arrived only to learn that Khalid had already died, he was visibly moved and said, "To God do we belong, and to Him shall we return." Then he sat at the door of Khalid's house until he had been prepared for burial. When the mourners came and began weeping for Khalid, someone said to ʿUmar, "Do you not hear? Will you not forbid them?" In response, he said, "Why should the women of Quraysh be faulted for weeping over Abu Sulayman so long as they do not strike themselves on the cheeks and cover their heads with dust?"

When ʿUmar went out to march in Khalid's funeral procession, he saw a woman in a state of ritual consecration among those weeping for him.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"It is Khalid's mother," someone replied.

Oh, what a loss his death is!" ʿUmar exclaimed, repeating the words two more times.

Then he said, "Has a woman ever given birth to a man greater than Khalid?"[441]

Two: The points we have mentioned would seem to indicate that Khalid died and was buried in Medina, and this is the view held by some historians. However, the majority of scholars hold that in fact, he died and was buried in Homs. This is the view favored by Ibn Kathir in al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, since there are reliable texts which indicate that after his dismissal by ʿUmar, Khalid went to Mecca on the minor pilgrimage, then returned to Syria, where he remained until he died in the year 21 A.H.

In any case, ʿUmar always spoke in praise of Khalid, both during his lifetime and after his death. Ibn Kathir quotes al-Waqidi as stating that when ʿUmar saw pilgrims who had come from Homs, he asked

them, "Do you have news to report to me?"

"Yes," they replied, "Khalid has died."

"To God do we belong, and to Him shall we return," he said. Then he added, "I swear to God, he always aimed straight at the enemies' necks, and he was blessed with success in all that he undertook."

There is no contradiction between 'Umar's praise for Khalid and the fact that the two men held differing points of view on certain matters of legal interpretation and acted in accordance with their distinctive views. If only those who disparage Khalid because he differed from 'Umar, or who disparage 'Umar because he differed from Khalid, would strive for a more comprehensive understanding of things by distinguishing between the independent legal interpretations for which each of these two men most assuredly merited a reward from God, and the kinds of intellectual and moral waywardness of which none of the Prophet's Companions was ever guilty.

Three: Those who reflect on 'Umar's caliphate cannot help but notice the distinctive, pure-hearted cooperation between 'Umar and 'Ali, may God be pleased with them. 'Ali was 'Umar's principle consultant in all affairs and problems which faced him. Moreover, any time 'Ali proposed a given course of action to 'Umar, the latter would set about carrying it out with full conviction. 'Umar's trust in 'Ali is summed up in his statement, "If it were not for 'Ali, 'Umar would perish."

As for 'Ali, he always advised 'Umar with the utmost sincerity and purity of intention. We have seen how 'Umar sought 'Ali's counsel concerning whether he should go out himself at the head of an army to fight the Persians. As for 'Ali's response, it was the advice of one who loved and cherished 'Umar: He counseled him not to go, but instead to remain where he was and direct the war effort through other Arabs under his command. He warned 'Umar that if he left, he would be creating a power vacuum which was bound to be more dangerous than the enemy he would have met on the battle field.

If the Messenger of God (pbuh) had announced that the caliphate should go after his death to 'Ali, would 'Ali have then discounted the Messenger of God's wishes in such a fashion, lending his support to those who had robbed him of his right to the caliphate – indeed, his duty to act in this capacity – with this spirit of earnest, effective cooperation? If the Prophet (pbuh) had issued instructions to make 'Ali the caliph after him, is it conceivable that all of his Companions would have disregarded his instructions and joined together unanimously – with 'Ali in the vanguard – to defy him (pbuh)?

Four: Just as Abu Bakr became caliph at the right time, that is, at a time when only he himself could have accomplished the tasks at hand in the best possible manner, so also did 'Umar become caliph at the right time. Given the upheavals which had resulted from the Messenger of God's death, one of the most important things that Abu Bakr did was to reestablish Islam -- both as a sociopolitical structure and as an object of firm belief in people's hearts. As for 'Umar, his most significant accomplishments included the extension of the Islamic conquests to the furthest reaches of Persia, Syria, and Morocco; the setting up of an official governmental apparatus responsible for the army and fighters' wages; and the reinforcement of the underpinnings of the Islamic state as the most powerful civilized state on earth.

These facts indicate the extent of God's wisdom in caring for His servants and providing the means of achieving their welfare and happiness in their individual and communal lives.

Five: 'Uthman and 'Umar were chosen as caliph in the same manner, that is, through appointment by the previous Muslim leader, the only difference being that whereas Abu Bakr appointed 'Umar in particular to be his successor, 'Umar appointed six different men as members of a shurá council, after which he authorized the entire Muslim community to choose from among these six men the one they deemed best fit for the caliphate.

As we have seen, 'Uthman was chosen from among these six men through consultation among these same six individuals; this was then followed by consultation with and a pledge of allegiance from those in the

Muslim community qualified to make decisions in such situations. ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, was among the six men referred to here, and he was also among the first to pledge their allegiance to ‘Uthman, may God be pleased with them both. We may be certain, then, that until the time of ‘Uthman’s accession to the caliphate, and indeed, until the end of the caliphate of ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, the Muslims were a single, united community, and that none of them harbored any doubts concerning the caliphate or who was most worthy of it. Rather, what may appear to us as doubts or objections were simply a part of the process of consultation and debate, which itself is required by the method of choosing a caliph laid down by Islamic law.

Try as you might, you will come upon no argument or debate during these entire three caliphates concerning whether or not the Qur’an or the Prophet (pbuh) specified a particular individual to be caliph following the death of the Messenger of God (pbuh); nor will you find any criticism of the manner in which any of these three caliphs were installed. One may ask then: After having remained united by a spirit of solidarity and cooperation throughout the terms of the first three caliphs, when and how did the Muslim community come to be split over the issue of the caliphate? We will return to this question in the context of our discussion of the caliphate of ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, and the events which took place during his era.

The caliphate of ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan

In the first year of ‘Uthman’s caliphate, that is, 24 A.H., al-Riyy was reconquered. During this same year, many people were afflicted with nosebleeds, including ‘Uthman himself, may God be pleased with him, on account of which he was unable to complete the major pilgrimage as he had intended to. In that same year ‘Uthman removed al-Mughirah Ibn Shu‘bah as governor of Kufah and replaced him with Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas.

In the year 25 A.H., ‘Uthman dismissed Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas from his post as governor of Kufah and replaced him with al-Walid Ibn ‘Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu‘ayt, a Companion who was also ‘Uthman’s maternal half-brother. This was the first time ‘Uthman had done anything to arouse people’s rancor against him, since he began giving preference to his relatives by appointing them to governorships.

In the year 26 A.H., ‘Uthman enlarged the Sacred Mosque in Mecca by purchasing buildings from their owners and adding them onto the mosque. In 27 A.H., Mu‘awiyah invaded Cyprus, traveling there by sea with the armies under his command. Accompanying the armies were ‘Ubadah Ibn al-Samit and his wife, Umm Haram Bint Milhan, who had also been a Companion of the Prophet’s. While on the expedition, Umm Haram fell off her mule and died of a head injury, and was buried there (in Cyprus). The Prophet (pbuh) had predicted to her that this army would be formed and prayed that she would be a part of it.[442]

In the same year, ‘Uthman removed ‘Amr Ibn al-As from his post as governor over Egypt and appointed ‘Abdullah Ibn Sa‘d Ibn Abi Sarh in his place, after which he invaded Africa and conquered it, including both mountainous and low-lying territories. Andalusia was conquered in the same year.

In the year 29 A.H., many other cities were conquered, and ‘Uthman expanded the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina. He made the additions from engraved stones; he made its pillars of stones as well, and its roof of teakwood. When the additions were completed, the mosque was 160 cubits long and 150 cubits wide.

In the year 30 A.H., numerous other territories were conquered in the land of Khurasan, which served to increase the proceeds from the kharaj, or land tax. Consequently, wealth began pouring in from all directions, as it were, and God brought great material prosperity to the Muslims in all the territories where they had gone.

In the year 32 A.H., al-‘Abbas Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib died, as did ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf, ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ud, Abu al-Darda’, who had taken over the judiciary in Syria for Mu‘awiyah, Abu Dharr Jundub Ibn Junadah al-Ghifari, and Zayd Ibn ‘Abdullah, may God be pleased with them all. In the year 33 A.H., ‘Abdullah Ibn Sa‘d Ibn Abi Sarh invaded Abyssinia.

Uthman's Policy in Choosing Governors and Assistants

It is a known fact that ‘Uthman, may God be pleased with him, used to show preference for his relatives of the tribe of Banu Umayyah by appointing them to governorships and other governmental positions. This, of course, required him to remove a number of the Companions from their positions so that he could replace them with his own relatives. This policy earned ‘Uthman the indignation of many people, and as such, it served as the springboard and primary justification for the insurrection which was instigated by the well-known Jew, ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’.

Ibn Kathir relates that a large group of Kufans rose up against Sa‘id Ibn al-As, governor of Kufah. In addition, they sent a delegation to dispute with ‘Uthman over the way in which he had dismissed so many of the Companions from their posts in order to employ members of Banu Umayyah in their place. When they met with the caliph, they spoke harsh, angry words. Disturbed by what he had heard, ‘Uthman sent for his governors in order to hold a consultation with them. Those who came to meet with the caliph were Mu‘awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan, governor of Syria; ‘Amr Ibn al-As, governor of Egypt; ‘Abdullah Ibn Sa‘d Ibn Abi Sarh, governor of Morocco; Sa‘id Ibn al-As, governor of Kufah; and ‘Abdullah Ibn Amir, governor of al-Basrah. The caliph sought their counsel concerning how to respond to the divisions which had arisen, and each of them offered his opinion. Then, after their various points of view had been reviewed and discussed, ‘Uthman decided to keep all of his officials in their current posts and to seek to win over the rebels and those who were indignant toward him with money. Having made this decision, he then sent them out on various military expeditions and border assignments.[443]

In the wake of these developments, the sons of some of the Prophet’s Companions began speaking out against ‘Uthman for many things he had done and inciting the people to rebel against him. By this time, ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ had wrought havoc in Egypt. Having stirred up the people sufficiently, he gathered approximately 600 riders and headed with them to Medina on the pretext that they wanted to perform the minor pilgrimage to Mecca. Their real intent, however, was to stir up a revolt in Medina. As they approached the city, ‘Uthman instructed ‘Ali to go out and speak with them and send them back to their own country. So ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, set out to meet them while they were at al-Juhfah.[444] The men accompanying ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ held ‘Ali in dread and awe, since ‘Abdullah had filled their minds with tall tales and falsehoods where ‘Ali was concerned. Be that as it may, ‘Ali chastised and vilified them, ordering them back to where they had come from. In response, they began blaming each other, saying, “So is this the man because of whom you’ve been waging war on the caliph?” Then they turned on their heels and went back to Egypt without having accomplished any of what they had set out to do.

‘Ali then reported back to ‘Uthman and told him that the men had gone home. In addition, he advised ‘Uthman to deliver a speech in which he would apologize to the people for the preference he had shown to certain of his relatives and announce that he had repented of this sort of conduct. Accepting ‘Ali’s counsel, ‘Uthman addressed the people on the following Friday, saying, “O God, I repent to You and seek Your forgiveness! O Lord, I of all people am the most contrite for the things I have done!” Then he wept, and all the Muslims wept with him. Then once again, he assured the people of his intention to desist from those practices which had aroused their bitterness and resentment against him, and he promised to dismiss

Marwan Ibn al-Hakam and his family members from their posts.

However, Marwan came to see ‘Uthman, full of reproach and even hostility, saying, “I would have preferred that you say such things when you were in a position of strength, in which case I would have been the first to support you and lend you my assistance. However, you spoke (only) when matters had come to a head and evil had surpassed all bounds. For I assure you, persisting in a sin for which one can be forgiven is better than repenting out of fear. If you had so desired, you could have simply repented without confessing your sin to us.”

Marwan then told ‘Uthman that there were people waiting at the door, so ‘Uthman authorized him to go out and speak to them however he wished. Thereupon, Marwan went out and said things which brought to naught all the good that ‘Uthman had achieved in his address to the people. Among other things, Marwan told them, “You have come to wrest our power from us. But now, depart. I swear to God, if you seek to do us harm, an event will transpire which brings harm to you instead, and whose outcome will not please you in the least.”

When ‘Ali learned of what had happened, he came to ‘Uthman in a rage and said, “Were you satisfied to let Marwan turn you away from your religion and your powers of reason? I swear to God, Marwan’s opinion counts for nothing concerning his religion or even himself! So mark my words: This man will eclipse you and not allow you to maintain your position of prominence and authority. As for me, I won’t be back to admonish you again.”

After ‘Ali had left, ‘Uthman’s wife Na’ilah came in to see him, since she had heard what ‘Ali was saying to him, and she said, “Shall I speak, or keep silent?”

“Speak,” he said.

“I heard ‘Ali tell you that he would not come to see you again. And you have obeyed Marwan in everything he wishes.”

“Advise me, then,” he replied.

“I urge you to fear God alone, and to follow the example set by your two companions before you. If you answer to Marwan, he will kill you. However, he has no standing before God, nor does he love or fear God. So send for ‘Ali and seek to be reconciled with him, for he understands you well, and he is a man whose word should not be defied.”

Hence, ‘Uthman sent for ‘Ali, but he refused to come, saying, “I made it clear to him that I would not come back.”

These encounters marked the beginning of the developments which set the insurrection ablaze, enabling those who lay in wait for ‘Uthman to fan its flames high and bring events to the worst possible juncture.

The beginning of the insurrection:
ʿUthman's murder

ʿUthman served as caliph for twelve years without engaging in any actions which might have engendered bitterness on the part of the people; in fact, he was more popular with many of the Qurayshites than ʿUmar Ibn al-Khattab had been, because ʿUmar had been stern with them, whereas ʿUthman was more lenient toward them and fostered close ties with them. However, people's attitude toward him changed when he began employing his relatives – as we have already had occasion to mention – in place of others. As for ʿUthman, he justified this practice at first as a means of nurturing family ties as God has commanded us to do. Nevertheless, it may have been this very practice which led to his assassination.

Ibn ʿAsakir quotes al-Zuhri as saying, "I once said to Saʿid Ibn al-Musayyib, 'Can you tell me how ʿUthman was killed, and how his relations with people were?' Ibn al-Musayyib replied, 'ʿUthman was killed unjustly, and the person who killed him was a wrongdoer, as a result of which anyone who may have forsaken him would have had good reason to do so.'" Ibn al-Musayyib then related to al-Zuhri the reasons behind ʿUthman's death and how it took place, an abbreviated version of which we mention here:

The people of Egypt once came to ʿUthman to complain about Ibn Abi Sarh; in response, ʿUthman wrote a letter to Ibn Abi Sarh in which he admonished him to change his ways and threatened him with the consequences of not doing so. However, Ibn Abi Sarh ignored ʿUthman's warnings and treated harshly those who had gone to register complaints against him.

The leading Companions, including ʿAli, Talhah, and A'ishah, then suggested to ʿUthman that he dismiss Ibn Abi Sarh and appoint someone in his place as governor of Egypt. ʿUthman responded by saying, "Choose for me the person you think I should appoint," and they proposed Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr. ʿUthman wrote a letter to this effect, and a number of the Emigrants and Helpers, accompanied by Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr himself, went to Egypt to carry out ʿUthman's instructions. When they were three days' march from the city, they encountered a Negro slave boy riding a camel which he was beating and hastening along as fast as it would go. The Companions stopped the boy and asked him, "What is your story? Why is it that you seem to be either fleeing or running after something?"

"I am the slave boy of the caliph," he replied, "and he has sent me to the governor of Egypt."

"Whose slave boy did you say you were?" they asked.

He then began to stutter, sometimes saying, "I am the caliph's slave boy," and other times, "I am Marwan's slave boy."

They then found a letter among the boy's things. Gathering about him the Emigrants, Helpers and others traveling with him, Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr opened the letter in their presence, and this is what it said:

If you are approached by Muhammad and so-and-so and so-and-so, kill them by artful means, thereby rendering his letter (of appointment) of no effect, and carry on with your work until you receive word from me. Then anyone who comes to me with a complaint against you, I will imprison.

Returning to Medina, the group gathered a number of the most prominent Companions there and informed them about the letter and the slave boy they had encountered. Once news of these things had spread, everyone in all of Medina was outraged at ʿUthman. When ʿAli saw this, he summoned some of the

leading men who had fought at the Battle of Badr, among them Talhah, al-Zubayr, Sa'd and 'Ammar, and went with them to see 'Uthman together with the letter, the slave boy, and the camel he had been riding.

"Is this your slave boy?" he asked 'Uthman.

"Yes, it is."

"Is this your camel?"

"Yes, it is."

"So did you write this letter?"

"No, I didn't. I swear by God, I did not write it, I did not give instructions for it to be written, nor do I have any knowledge of it!"

"Is this your stamp, then?" 'Ali asked.

"Yes, it is," 'Uthman replied.

"How is it that your own slave boy can leave on your own camel, and be carrying a letter bearing your stamp without your knowing about it?"

But again 'Uthman swore that he had not written the letter or given instructions for it to be written, and that he had never sent this servant to Egypt.

Finally, after examining the script in which the letter was written, they realized that it was Marwan's handwriting. So they asked 'Uthman to hand Marwan over to them, but he refused, even though Marwan was staying in 'Uthman's house. Hence, the group left 'Uthman's house in a rage. They knew now that 'Uthman had not sworn falsely; however, they were angry that he had refused to hand Marwan over to them.

Reports of these events spread throughout Medina, and the people rose up and laid siege to 'Uthman in his house, denying him access to water. When he and his family had gotten thirsty enough, 'Uthman looked out over the people and said, "Is there no one who will ask 'Ali to bring us water?"

When his request reached 'Ali, he sent 'Uthman three skins full of water, although they only reached him with great difficulty.

`Ali then received reports that there were people who wished to kill 'Uthman.

He said, "All we want is for him to deliver Marwan to us. We do not want to kill him."

Then he said to his sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, "Take your swords and stand guard at 'Uthman's door, and let no one get near him!"

A number of the Prophet's Companions then joined al-Hasan and al-Husayn in keeping watch at the door. Meanwhile, the mobs were pushing and shoving to get inside and kill 'Uthman, but the Prophet's two grandsons warded them off together with the Companions who had come to their aid.

However, some of them managed to scale the wall; once inside, they attacked 'Uthman with their swords and slew him. When news of this reached 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, he was incensed, and he said to his two sons, "How could the caliph be murdered while you were standing at his door?!"

Then he raised his hand and slapped al-Hasan and struck al-Husayn on his chest, uttering imprecations against Muhammad Ibn Talhah and 'Abdullah Ibn al-Zubayr.

And thus it was that 'Uthman's assassination opened the door to a string of revolts that seemed to go on indefinitely.

The pledge of allegiance to ‘Ali as caliph and the search for ‘Uthman’s assassins

Furious over what had happened, ‘Ali left ‘Uthman’s house. As he came out, people came rushing up to him and saying, “We must have a leader! Give us your hand, and let us pledge you our allegiance.”

ʿAli replied, “It is not your place to set me up as your caliph, but rather, those who fought at Badr. Whomever they approve shall be caliph.”

Soon thereafter, everyone who had fought at Badr came to ‘Ali and said, “We know of no one more worthy of the caliphate than you. So give us your hand, and let us pledge you our allegiance.”

No sooner had the caliphate passed to ‘Ali and people had pledged their allegiance to him than Marwan and his son fled. ‘Ali then came to ‘Uthman’s wife to ask her about ‘Uthman’s assailants.

“I don’t know,” she said. “Two men who were unknown to me came in to see him, and they were accompanied by Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr.”

ʿAli then summoned Muhammad and asked him about what ‘Uthman’s wife had said. He replied, “She is not lying. I did come to see him, and I wanted to kill him. But then he reminded me of my father, and I retreated. I am repentant to God for what I did, and I swear that I did not kill him or even lay my hands on him.”

“That is right,” ‘Uthman’s wife said, “but he did let them in.”

Ibn ‘Asakir relates on the authority of Kinanah, the servant of Safiyah and others that ‘Uthman was killed by a blue-eyed, fair-skinned man from Egypt. Ibn ‘Asakir also relates the following account on the authority of Abu Thawr al-Fahmi, who said:

I went in to see ‘Uthman while he was under siege, and he said, “I have ten virtues which redound to my credit with my Lord: I was the fourth person to embrace Islam; I equipped the ‘army of hardship’[445] ; the Messenger of God (pbuh) gave me his daughter’s hand in marriage, and when she died, he married me to his other daughter; I have never arrogantly denied my need for God nor been discontent with my lot; from the time I pledged my allegiance to the Messenger of God (pbuh) with my right hand, I never once placed it on my private parts; from the time I became a Muslim, not a Friday has gone by when I did not free a slave, and if I was prevented from doing so, I would free a slave at a later time; never once have I committed adultery or theft, whether in the era of ignorance or since the coming of Islam; and I helped to compile the Qur’an during the lifetime of the Messenger of God (pbuh).

It is also firmly established that ‘Uthman was killed on the second of the three “days of meat drying” [446] in the year 35 A.H.

Lessons and principles

One: One of the distinctive features of ‘Uthman’s caliphate was the large number of conquests which he initiated and the breadth of their geographical scope. All of Khurasan and Africa were conquered, and the conquests extended as far as Andalusia. ‘Uthman accomplished other feats of significance as well, such as

the establishment of a single, fully attested, authorized text of the Qur'an after incorrect patterns of speech and barbarisms had begun creeping into people's speech, as a result of which it was feared that the language of the Qur'an itself might be affected thereby; he also undertook a major expansion of the mosque in Medina.

As for 'Uthman's reliance in many of his military expeditions on 'Abdullah Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abi Sarh and others like him, this serves as no cause to find fault with him, for Islam blots out any wrongdoing of which a person may have been guilty prior to his becoming a believer. Ibn Sarh may have atoned for the evil he had committed previously by means of the noble acts which he performed later. After all, it is a known fact that he reformed and adopted a path of integrity, and that he became one of the most devout believers of his time.

Two: Whatever criticisms may be leveled against 'Uthman for his having chosen most of his governors and assistants from among his own tribe of Banu Umayyah, we must realize that this practice was based on a particular legal interpretation which he had adopted, and which he defended before many of the Companions. Moreover, whatever we may think of his point of view or his defense thereof, we must not allow his error – if we consider him to have been in error – to blind us to the place of respect and honor which he occupied with the Messenger of God (pbuh), the fact that he was among the first individuals to enter Islam, or the statement made about him by the Messenger of God (pbuh) during the days of the Tabuk Expedition: "Nothing 'Uthman does from now on will cause him any harm."

We also need to realize that the Companions' discussion of and objections to 'Uthman's conduct were one thing, while our going back over the same ground now out of the desire to criticize and denigrate him is quite another. The Companions' objections to 'Uthman's policies were a sound manner of dealing with an existing problem which had the potential of being resolved and corrected; hence, their discussion of this matter, even if it involved criticism and faultfinding, was a positive, beneficial process. As for our discussions today of the same issue now that 'Uthman's actions and associated events have become a part of history, they are nothing more than cheap attacks on the Companions – and in particular, the rightly guided caliphs among them -- whom the Messenger of God (pbuh) praised so highly, and whom he (pbuh) warned us not to dishonor in any way.

For those who wish to maintain intellectual integrity in the narration of events, it is sufficient to respect the same limits which were adhered to by trustworthy writers and historians such as al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir and Ibn al-Athir.

Three: With the appearance of the earliest signs of the insurrection which took place toward the end of 'Uthman's caliphate, we note the appearance of 'Abdullah Ibn Saba' on the stage of events, where his role in fanning the flames of the revolt becomes apparent.

A Jew of Yemeni origin, 'Abdullah Ibn Saba' went to Egypt during 'Uthman's caliphate and began stirring people up against the caliph, pretending to have a special love for 'Ali and the other members of the Prophet's family. He would say things such as, "Is Muhammad not superior to Jesus before God? If so, then Muhammad is more worthy to return to people in the final days than Jesus would be. Moreover, he will return in the person of his paternal cousin, 'Ali, who was closer to Muhammad than anyone else."[447]

With nonsense such as this, 'Abdullah Ibn Saba' was able to deceive a number of people in Egypt, even though he had met with no support when he made such statements in Yemen. As for those who were taken in by his claims, they were the ones whom he brought with him to Medina for the purpose of leading a revolt against 'Uthman; however, as we have seen, the one who sent them fleeing was 'Ali himself, may God be pleased with him.

It is clear, then, that the split of the Muslim community into Sunnite and Shiite factions did not begin until

the caliphate of 'Uthman, and that its primary instigator was 'Abdullah Ibn Saba'. This is true regardless of the harm or injustice which was suffered later by the Prophet's descendents or their followers at the hands of the Umayyads and others. The important point to note here is that neither of these two realities, both of which go to make up the fundamental facts of history, should cause us to lose sight of the other.

Four: Once more, let us stress the true nature of the relationship which existed between 'Uthman and 'Ali during this third caliphate, as well as the attitude which 'Ali took toward 'Uthman, may God be pleased with both of them.

We have seen that 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, took the initiative to pledge his allegiance to 'Uthman as the new caliph; in fact, many historians, as we are reminded by Ibn Kathir, hold the view that he was the very first to pledge allegiance to 'Uthman. We have also seen how, when 'Ali learned of the throng which was being led by 'Abdullah Ibn Saba' toward Medina to stir up its inhabitants against 'Uthman, he said, "I will protect you from any harm they wish to do to you." Thereupon, he set out and met them at al-Juhfah, where he staved them off with sharp words of reproach and even curses. As a consequence, they withdrew, blaming each other as they went, and some of them even asked, "Is this the man because of whom you've been waging war on the caliph?!"[448] Similarly, we have seen the wholehearted sincerity and genuine concern with which 'Ali used to advise 'Uthman and how he stood by him to the very end, to the point where he enlisted his own two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, to protect him from those who had hemmed him in on all sides.

It is thus clear that 'Ali was 'Uthman's staunchest supporter and defender during his caliphate and throughout his final ordeal, and that the only reason he was stern in his advice to him was his great love for him and concern for his welfare.

Once you are aware of this, you will also realize that a person of 'Ali's greatness should be the object of the utmost affection and reverence to everyone who believes in God and His Apostle – indeed, to everyone in full possession of his human sensitivities. The evidence of love is found in the sincerity with which one follows another's example and perseveres on this path. This was the life story of 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, as it was played out in relation to the caliphs who preceded him. Hence, let this story be the example which we ourselves choose to emulate, thereby expressing the sincerity of our love for him.

The caliphate of ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him

ʿAli was recognized as caliph by the Muslim community in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, 33 A.H., immediately following ‘Uthman’s murder. However, a number of the Companions delayed pledging their allegiance to ‘Ali, including Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas, Usamah Ibn Zayd, al-Mughirah Ibn Shu‘bah, al-Nu‘man Ibn Bashir, and Hassan Ibn Thabit. In addition, ‘Ali’s entire caliphate was filled with insurrections, wars, and turmoil, from the Battle of the Camel, to the Battle of Siffin, the conflicts which broke out between the Muslim community and Mu‘awiyah, and the Kharijite rebellion which ended with their committing the heinous crime of assassinating ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him. In what follows we provide a summary version of these events.

Avenging ‘Uthman’s death and the Battle of the Camel

There can be no doubt that ‘Uthman met his end at the hands of a group of transgressors, and that the Jews had a hand in what took place. It was thus only natural that ‘Uthman’s murderers should bear the guilt for their violent offense. Hence, the entire Muslim community, with ‘Ali in the lead, sought to bring these murderers to justice. However, ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, asked those who were the most anxious to bring a conclusion to the matter to exercise patience and wait until he had accomplished certain things which he saw as necessary to ensure the proper execution of his plan and put an end to the insurrection. Historians are in unanimous agreement that ‘Ali loathed the malefactors who had taken ‘Uthman’s life that he was awaiting an opportunity to apprehend them, and that he wished he could have overtaken them earlier and imposed God’s prescribed punishment on them. However, events did not take the course he had hoped they would.[449]

What happened, in short, was that Talhah, al-Zubayr and a number of other Companions were of the opinion that moving quickly to apprehend ‘Uthman’s killers and bring them to justice was more likely to ensure the well-being of the Muslim community and stave off an insurrection. Hence, they offered ‘Ali their services toward this end, saying that they could bring him soldiers from al-Basrah and Kufah to provide him support. However, he asked them to wait until he could prepare his preferred strategy for carrying out the operation.[450] What ensued is that as ‘Ali followed his preferred course of action, Talhah, al-Zubayr and their like-minded companions did the same with theirs. Specifically, those who believed that haste was in order – including not only Talhah, al-Zubayr and a significant number of other Companions, but, in addition, A’ishah, mother of the faithful – met in al-Basrah. Their sole intention in taking such action was to remind the people of al-Basrah of the necessity of working together to capture ‘Uthman’s murderers and to exact vengeance on them.

Once ‘Ali was aware of what they had done, he sent an army to al-Basrah to correct the situation and bring accord among the parties concerned. It was with this understanding that ‘Ali’s soldiers met with Talhah and al-Zubayr and their group without any intention on anyone’s part to initiate hostilities or incite an insurrection. ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, then sent a messenger by the name of al-Qa‘qa‘ Ibn ‘Amr to A’ishah.

“Mother,” he asked her, “what has brought you to these parts?”

“The desire to reconcile people,” she replied.

The messenger then approached Talhah and al-Zubayr and asked them the same question.

They replied, saying, “We likewise have come only to bring about reconciliation among the people.”

Everyone concerned then met to exchange opinions, and they agreed that the matter should be left in ‘Ali’s hands, with the understanding that he would do everything in his power to bring God’s prescribed punishment to bear on ‘Uthman’s killers as soon as he was able to do so. Al-Qa‘qa‘ then returned to ‘Ali with a report on what they had agreed on. Thereupon, ‘Ali addressed the people, praising God for the blessing of reconciliation and agreement and announcing that he would be departing the following day.[451]

But what transpired after this? As soon as ‘Ali had delivered this message to the people, the leaders of the revolt – including al-Ashtar al-Nakha‘i, Shurayh Ibn Awfá, ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ (also known as Ibn al-Sawda’), Salim Ibn Tha‘labah, and Ghulam Ibn al-Haytham – met for a consultation. (Fortunately, as Ibn Kathir mentions, none of the Companions was among them.) They reminded each other of the danger which would be posed to them if there was reconciliation and agreement among the Companions, and someone among them said, “So, then, let us deal ‘Ali the same fate we dealt ‘Uthman!”

However, ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ dismissed this opinion and warned of its potential dangers. Then he said, “Your only salvation lies in mingling with the people; if you see them in harmony with each other, stir up hatred and warfare among them. Whatever you do, do not let them come to agreement! Then, when they find themselves being attacked, they will fight in self-defense.”

After agreeing on this approach, the leaders disbanded.

The next day ‘Ali set out, and not long thereafter, Talhah and al-Zubayr did likewise, with all of them settled on being reconciled and in agreement. With this atmosphere prevailing, the Muslims spent a night of peaceful rest, while ‘Uthman’s killers spent it in anxiety and torment.

‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ and his cohorts had agreed to stir up warfare beginning in the pre-dawn hours, drawing people into the conflict no matter what it might cost them. Hence, the conspirators, who numbered close to two thousand men, rose before daybreak, unsheathed their swords and came upon the people unawares. Roused thus out of their slumber, the people rushed for their weapons and began fighting off the attackers. Thinking that the attack had been planned by ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, they said, “The people of Kufah have committed treachery and plotted evil against us!”

When news of the assault reached ‘Ali, he said, “What has happened?!”

Those around him cried, “The people of al-Basrah have plotted evil against and betrayed us!”

Then, donning their coats of mail and mounting their horses, they all set off without any of them knowing the truth of the matter. A full-scale battle was soon underway, with horsemen fencing to the death. Those who had gathered in ‘Ali’s defense numbered 20,000, while those gathered about A’ishah and those with her numbered nearly 30,000. The knaves working for Ibn al-Sawda’, may God bring him to shame, went on killing right and left without flagging for a moment, and although ‘Ali’s herald cried out, “Desist! Desist!”, his words fell on deaf ears.[452]

However, in the midst of all the confusion and killing, some of those engaged in the battle would suddenly recognize one another as fellow believers and lovers of the Prophet (pbuh); whenever this happened, they would stop fighting, regardless of what side they had been on. The following account is related by al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Qadi, on the authority of Harb Ibn al-Aswad al-Du’ali, who said:

When ‘Ali and his companions approached Talhah and al-Zubayr and the two armies engaged, ‘Ali came out on the mule that had belonged to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and cried out, “Summon al-Zubayr Ibn al-‘Awwam and have him come to me.”

Al-Zubayr was then summoned, and he approached until the two men’s mounts were side by side.

“Zubayr,” ‘Ali said to him, “I adjure you by God, do you not remember the day when we were in such-and-such a place and the Prophet (pbuh) passed by and asked you, ‘Zubayr, do you not love ‘Ali?’ In reply you said to him, ‘How could I fail to love my paternal and maternal cousins when we share a common faith’?”

“So tell me the truth,” ‘Ali continued, “are you not making war on me unjustly?”

“Indeed, I am,” replied al-Zubayr, “and I swear to you, I had forgotten what I heard the Messenger of God

(pbuh) say that day. But now I do remember, and I swear by God, I will never wage war on you again!"

Then al-Zubayr retreated, passing through the ranks of soldiers as he went.

When A'ishah's camel fell to the ground, her sedan chair was carried to a spot far removed from all the commotion. Then 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, came to greet her and inquired after her welfare, saying, "How are you, O mother of the faithful?"

"I am well," she replied.

"May God forgive all your sins," he said to her.

'Ali was followed by the other Companions and the prominent figures in the tribe, who likewise brought her greetings of peace and sought reassurance of her well-being.[453]

Mu'awiyah and the Battle of Siffin

As soon as 'Ali arrived back in Kufah, where he had located the headquarters of his caliphate, he sent Jarir Ibn 'Abdullah al-Bajli to Syria to inform Mu'awiyah that the Emigrants and Helpers had pledged allegiance to him as their new caliph, and to invite him to do likewise. However, Mu'awiyah was of the opinion that the pledge of allegiance to 'Ali had not yet become official due to the fact that the Companions with the authority to make decisions on such matters were scattered abroad, and that 'Ali could not be recognized as the new caliph until all such Companions were gathered in one place. Hence, he stated that he would not do as 'Ali had asked until 'Uthman's killers had been put to death, at which time the Muslims could choose the next caliph for themselves.

As for 'Ali, he was convinced that he had rightfully become caliph by agreement of the inhabitants of Medina, the city to which the Prophet (pbuh) had emigrated, and that this fact was binding on all those outside the city who had not yet recognized him as their new leader. As for the matter of taking vengeance on those who had assassinated 'Uthman, we have noted on more than one occasion that 'Ali was among those most keen to see this task accomplished, but that he was laying out a plan of action which he believed would ensure the most effective results.

When 'Ali learned of Mu'awiyah's refusal, he considered him to be an outlaw withholding obedience to the rightful Imam, and on the 12th of Rajab, 36 A.H., he set out with a number of others to confront Mu'awiyah. While he was encamped at al-Nakhilah, he was joined by Ibn 'Abbas, who came from al-Basrah after appointing someone to take his place there as governor. 'Ali then mobilized his armies and set out to wage war against the people of Syria and force them to surrender to the will of the greater Muslim community.[454]

When Mu'awiyah received news of what 'Ali had done, he marched out of Syria with his armies to meet him. After the two sides had met on the plain of Siffin on the Euphrates River, messengers were sent back and forth between the two camps for two months or more, with 'Ali calling upon Mu'awiyah to pledge his allegiance to him as caliph and reassuring him that 'Uthman's assassins would be punished in due course, and with Mu'awiyah – who, as 'Uthman's paternal cousin, was the person with the primary right to demand that his death be avenged -- calling upon Ali to pursue the killers. Some fighting may also have occurred between the two sides during this time.

The two sides remained in this state until they entered the sacred month of Muharram, 37 A.H., at which time 'Ali and Mu'awiyah agreed to a one-month truce in the hope of reaching agreement. However, the end of the month came and went without any progress having been made toward a reconciliation. Hence, 'Ali instructed a herald to make the following statement: "O people of Syria, the Commander of the Faithful declares to you: I have been forbearing toward you in the hope that you would reflect on the truth and return to it. However, you have continued in your tyrannical ways. Therefore, I now declare you to be in default; and God does not love the traitorous."[455]

At this point, Mu'awiyah and 'Amr Ibn al-As ordered a full mobilization of their army; 'Ali likewise mobilized his army, placing the horsemen of Kufah under the command of al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i and those of al-Basrah under the command of Sahl Ibn Hanif. However, he instructed those with him not to engage in hostilities until the Syrian army had done so, not to deliver the coup de grace to the enemy's wounded, and not to strip or otherwise insult or degrade their women.

The first two days witnessed fierce combat, which continued for a full week without either side gaining an advantage over the other. However, the fighting eventually began taking a toll on Mu'awiyah and his men, and 'Ali's army was on the verge of victory. Mu'awiyah and 'Amr Ibn al-As then consulted about the matter, and 'Amr proposed that Mu'awiyah invite the people of Iraq to submit to arbitration by the Book of God. Taking 'Amr's advice, Mu'awiyah instructed his men to raise copies of the Qur'an on their spears; at the same time, he had a herald announce on his behalf, "This is the Book of Almighty God! Let it decide between us!"

When 'Ali's companions – who had been on the verge of winning a victory -- saw this, they were divided amongst themselves. Some favored submitting to the proposed arbitration, while others insisted on settling the matter through further fighting, realizing that it was nothing but a ruse. 'Ali himself was of the latter opinion; however, he was obliged to adopt the opposing point of view due to the sheer numbers of its supporters. He then sent al-Ash'ath Ibn Qays to Mu'awiyah to ask him what he wanted. Mu'awiyah's response was, "Let us all return to the Book of God, allowing it to decide between us. After each side has appointed a man of its choosing, both men will commit themselves to issuing a verdict based on what is commanded by the Book of God. Then whatever they decide, all of us will abide by it."

The people of Syria chose 'Amr Ibn al-As, while the people of Iraq chose Abu Musá al-Ash'ari. After drawing up a document to this effect, the two sides agreed to postpone the final judgment on the matter until the month of Ramadan, at which time the two arbiters would meet at Dumat al-Jandal. Having reached agreement on these points, the two sides dispersed.

By the time 'Ali returned to Kufah, the division which had resulted from events at Siffin had spread to his army, and a group of approximately 12,000 men who viewed the arbitration as a mere ploy on the part of Mu'awiyah held themselves aloof from 'Ali and withdrew to a village by the name of Harura'. 'Ali sent 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas to speak with them and advise them; however, his mission bore no fruit. Hence, 'Ali went out to them himself and said, "What is the reason for this disaffection of yours?"

"The way you handled affairs at Siffin," they replied.

"But I stipulated that the arbiters should allow what the Qur'an allows and forbid what it forbids!" he told them.

So they asked him, "Do you think it is just to set men up as arbiters over people's lives?"

`Ali, may God be pleased with him, replied, "We did not set up men as our arbiters, but the Qur'an. This Qur'an is simply words written in the form of a book which utters nothing by itself but rather, provides the words to be spoken by human beings."

"Why, then, did you agree on a deadline for yourselves?"

"So that the ignorant may gain understanding and the learned may be confirmed in their knowledge. Through this truce, God may reform this nation of ours," 'Ali replied.

After hearing what 'Ali had to say, the men came around to his point of view, and he said, "Come back to your city, and may God's blessing be upon you."

So they returned to the last man.

When the agreed-upon time period had elapsed and it was Ramadan, 37 A.D., 'Ali sent Abu Musá al-Ash'ari with a number of the Companions and people from Kufah, while Mu'awiyah sent 'Amr Ibn al-As with a number of the inhabitants of Syria. The two sides met at Dumat al-Jandal, and after the two men had offered praise to God and exchanged exhortations, they agreed to send for paper and a scribe to whom they could dictate everything they had decided. Although they remained unable to settle on who to appoint as the new caliph, Abu Musá agreed to have both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah removed from power. Abu Musá favored no one but 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr as the new caliph; however, 'Abdullah, may God be pleased with

him, wanted nothing to do with the matter.

The two arbiters thus agreed to depose both ‘Ali and Mu‘awiyah and to leave the question of who should replace them in the hands of a shurá council representing the Muslim community. The two men then went to the people on both sides to announce what they had decided. The first to speak was Abu Musá al-Ash‘ari. After giving praise to God and praying for God’s blessings on the Messenger of God, he said, “O people, having examined the affairs of this nation, ‘Amr and I have agreed that what will best serve the people’s interests and help toward reuniting them is to remove both ‘Ali and Mu‘awiyah from their posts.” Abu Musá then stepped aside and ‘Amr rose to speak; after giving praise to God, he said, “You have heard the words spoken by this man, namely, that he has deposed his comrade, and that I have agreed to do the same. However, I have chosen to keep my comrade Mu‘awiyah in power, since he, being the patron of ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan and the one who demands that his death be avenged, is the man most worthy to take ‘Uthman’s place.”

The people then dispersed to their respective domiciles, while ‘Amr and his companions went in to greet Mu‘awiyah as the new caliph. As for Abu Musá, he was ashamed to face ‘Ali and went to Mecca, while ‘Abbas and Shurayh Ibn Hani’ went to inform ‘Ali of what had happened.[456]

The Kharijites and ‘Ali’s murder

When ‘Ali sent Abu Musa and the soldiers who were with him to Dumat al-Jandal, the Kharijites’[457] rebellion intensified all the more. Despite their keen devotion to ‘Ali, their resentment against him reached the point where they openly declared him to be outside the pale of Islam due to his having agreed to the arbitration proposed by Mu‘awiyah. After attempting in vain to reason with them, ‘Ali finally said to them, “We promise not to expel you from our places of worship so long as you do not forsake us; nor will we deny you your share of the spoils we have brought back so long as you remain in solidarity with us, and we will not go to war against you unless you make the first move.”

After announcing his rejection of the arbiters’ judgment, ‘Ali set out for Syria with a large army to fight Mu‘awiyah. However, he received word that the Kharijites had been wreaking havoc in the land, shedding blood, committing highway robbery, and showing no respect for even the most sacred prohibitions. Among their crimes was the murder of the Messenger of God’s companion ‘Abdullah Ibn Khabbab and his pregnant wife! Once ‘Ali had learned of these atrocities, he and those with him feared that if the Kharijites went to Syria and fought with Mu‘awiyah and his men, they might gain control over their kinsfolk as well; hence, they agreed to begin by fighting the Kharijites instead.

`Ali and his comrades thus headed out for a confrontation with the Kharijites. As they were approaching al-Mada’in, ‘Ali sent word to them in al-Nahrawan, saying, “Turn over to us those of you who murdered our brethren so that we may put them to death. Once you have complied with this demand, we will leave you in peace and march to Syria, for perhaps God will bring you to a state better than the one you are in at present.” The word they sent back was, “All of us killed your brethren. Moreover, we consider neither their lives nor yours as sacred!”

When he had received their reply, ‘Ali approached them with stern admonitions and warnings, but their only response was to call out to one another to prepare to fight and to meet their Maker. Before commencing hostilities, ‘Ali instructed Abu Ayyub al-Ansari to raise the banner of safety and announce, “Whoever approaches this banner shall be safe. The same goes for whoever departs for Kufah or al-Mada’in.” In response, a large number of the Kharijites departed, leaving only about one thousand of them under the command of ‘Abdullah Ibn Wahb al-Rasibi. In the end, it was the Kharijites who initiated the fighting, and they were slain to the last man (with some narratives reporting that most of them were killed). Only seven of ‘Ali’s companions died in the battle. However, events then took a turn for the worse for ‘Ali, may God’s favor rest upon him: His army was plagued with turmoil, he was opposed by many of the people of Iraq, and conditions in Syria spun out of control as his opponents there went “roaming right and left,” as Ibn Kathir puts it, claiming that Mu‘awiyah had been established as the rightful caliph based on the judgment issued by the two arbiters.

One must bear in mind in this regard that the stronger the people of Syria became, the more helpless the people of Iraq grew. Hence, despite their awareness that their caliph, ‘Ali, was superior to all other men of his time, being the most humbly devoted to God, the most unworldly, the most knowledgeable, and the most devout, prayerful and God-fearing, they nevertheless disappointed and forsook him. As a consequence, he grew to loath his own life so much that he would often say, “I swear by the One who causes the seed to burst open and creates each living soul, this (pointing to his beard) will be stained by the blood that flows from this (pointing to his head). For what is to restrain the most depraved of all

humanity?"

Meanwhile, 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Muljam, a Kharijite leader, had become betrothed to a woman of extraordinary beauty by the name of Qatam. Qatam's father and brother had been killed in the battle of al-Nahrawan, so she stipulated that in order for them to marry, he would have to kill 'Ali, may God be pleased with him. In reply, Ibn Muljam declared, "The fact is, the only reason I came to this city was to kill 'Ali!" Following this, their marriage was consummated and Qatam began goading Ibn Muljam to fulfill his promise to murder 'Ali. On the night of Friday, 17 Ramadan, 40 A.H., Ibn Muljam and two of his followers lay in wait across from the gate through which 'Ali usually came out. Then, when he emerged to wake people up for the dawn prayer, Ibn Muljam came upon him unexpectedly and struck him with his sword on the crown of his head, causing the blood to flow down over his beard. Knowing that Ibn Muljam was the person who had attacked him, 'Ali said to his companions, "If I die, put him to death, and if I live, I know best what to do to him." As he was dying, he began repeating, "There is no god but Allah," without saying anything else. 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, died at the age of 63 after serving as caliph for four years and nine months.

Ibn Kathir considers it most likely that 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, was buried in the governmental headquarters in Kufah. However, most historians believe that his relatives and friends concealed his grave for fear of its location becoming known to the Kharijites. There has been a great deal of speculation concerning where 'Ali was buried, with some saying that his body was moved to al-Baqi' cemetery or elsewhere.

As for Ibn Muljam, he was killed by al-Hasan, may God be pleased with him, and his corpse was burned.[458]

Lessons and Principles

One: Was there any fundamental disagreement between 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, and those who were impatient to see 'Uthman's death avenged and his murderers brought to justice? Based on what we have said thus far, it will be clear that the apprehension and punishment of those who assassinated 'Uthman was never a subject of disagreement between the two groups. It was simply that A'ishah, Talhah, al-Zubayr and their associates were anxious for this to be the first thing which 'Ali set about accomplishing after becoming caliph, whereas 'Ali himself felt it was necessary to begin by restoring order in the land, and then to punish the malefactors in a quieter, more systematic manner.

It was this concern and determination on 'Ali's part which formed the basis for the reconciliation which was concluded between the two sides, with everyone – including A'ishah, Talhah, and al-Zubayr – agreeing with full confidence and peace of mind to place the matter in 'Ali's hands and allow him to handle it as he saw fit. This decided, those who had gathered in Kufah withdrew from the mission which they had assigned themselves, as it were, and returned to their respective homes.

Two: This being the case, what hindered them from carrying out what they had agreed upon, that is, placing the matter in 'Ali's hands and cooperating with him at every step?

As we have seen, what impeded them was the plot which had been hatched by the headmen of the insurrection, foremost among whom was "Ibn al-Sawda'," that is, 'Abdullah Ibn Saba'. Alarmed by the news that the Muslims had reached agreement, these men decided to infiltrate the Muslim ranks, then take both sides by surprise in the dark predawn hours, falling upon them with their swords from all directions. In so doing, they hoped to destroy the trust which existed between the two sides and ignite the fires of unrest among them, since each side was bound to conclude that the other side had been plotting against them in secret, exploiting the truce to which they had agreed as a mere facade to achieve other aims.

And this is precisely what happened. Plotting this sort of intrigue is a cheap, easy task which requires nothing but a mean, depraved disposition. But what could these Companions, whose souls were untainted by such deceitfulness and corruption, have done other than fight to ward off these unannounced attacks? And what were they to think but that this raid was an evil plot which had been hatched by the other side? Even so, we have noted how, whenever any of them recognized his opponent, both of them would refrain from further fighting and come together instead with apologies and regrets.

Hence, this insurrection did not arise out of some fit of thoughtlessness that happened to have taken over the minds and hearts of the Prophet's Companions, may God's favor rest upon them all, whether they had sided with 'Ali or with A'ishah, Talhah, and al-Zubayr. Rather, it was the work of intruders who, having been planted in the believers' midst, sought to delude all of the Companions as one man, regardless of which side of the disagreement they happened to be on.

Given all this, I fail to understand why it is that no matter how many books you happen to read on these events, you find no references to this sedition and the critical role which it played in everything that transpired at that time. What one finds instead is that the books which treat this subject deal solely with what appears on the surface rather than with the more subtle factors which were at work. Such writings level unjustified accusations and harmful criticisms at those who were victims of the insurrection, while failing to say a single word about those who engineered the rebellion, those who guarded its interests, or those who kept its flames ablaze, beginning with the plan to assassinate 'Uthman and ending with the murder of 'Ali, may God's favor rest upon him.

When one writes about the Kharijite rebellion in this fashion, is he not becoming an accomplice to the same wicked scheme of which they were guilty?

Three: At this juncture, let us affirm our certainty of 'Ali's complete sincerity in all that he did or left undone – may God bring him honor – and our firm conviction that he was a man of abundant knowledge and understanding who would never have acted merely in the service of his own personal desires or interests. 'Ali was the primary consultant and advisor to each of the three caliphs who preceded him; he accepted people's pledges of allegiance to him as caliph after 'Uthman's death and looked upon Mu'awiyah's opposition to him as disobedience to the Muslim community and to their rightful Imam; moreover, after extended efforts to reason with Mu'awiyah and persuade him to recognize his right to the caliphate, he dealt with him accordingly. Bearing in mind all these facts, we must conclude, together with the majority of Muslim scholars over the ages, that in his rebellion against 'Ali, Mu'awiyah was, indeed, in rebellion against the Muslims' rightful Imam and that 'Ali was the rightful caliph after 'Uthman.

However, we must not forget that even those who declare themselves in revolt against the rightful Imam are individuals with a particular interpretation of the Islamic law they are defending. Hence, although it was permissible for the party holding the opposing interpretation – namely, 'Ali, may God be pleased with him – to admonish, then warn, then go to war with Mu'awiyah, this does not give us the right, fourteen centuries later, to make a habit of denigrating Mu'awiyah and speaking of him as if he were our mortal foe when there is no clear benefit to be gained from such an approach. It should suffice us, in the realm of doctrine, to know that based on the requirements and rules laid down by Islamic law, the caliph who succeeded 'Uthman was 'Ali, may God be pleased with him, and that in his rebellion against him, Mu'awiyah represented the party opposed to 'Ali's leadership of the Muslim community. Beyond this, we can only leave matters in the hands of God Almighty, the final Judge of all.

Four: When we examine the attitudes taken by the Kharijites and the way in which they shifted from a position of the most ardent support and defense of 'Ali to one of hostile, passionate rejection of his authority, we will realize clearly that they fell victims to extremism. As you are aware, Islam rests in its doctrines and rules of conduct on a foundation of restraint and moderation. Whoever derives knowledge from its original sources and becomes convinced of its principles and requirements, seeking to live a life of

clemency and forbearance, will avoid being carried away by either fanatic excess, on one hand, or passivity and neglect on the other.

Most of the Kharijites were harsh, uncivilized nomadic Arabs whose minds and hearts remained impervious to the criteria set by knowledge and understanding and the compassion and tolerance which they require. Hence, it was inevitable that they would surrender to their rash tendencies and their rude dispositions. This is clear from the fact that they declared ‘Ali, may God’s favor rest upon him, to be an unbeliever for his having agreed to the arbitration proposed by Mu‘awiyah. A further outgrowth of this position on their part was that they used to declare people unbelievers simply because they had committed major sins; in fact, many of them used to declare anyone who committed even the slightest disobedience to be outside the pale of Islam! The effects of this sort of fanaticism are still evident in our own day, and the pastime of declaring people unbelievers for the most trivial reasons is representative of this extremist mentality. However, as we have stated, it is a mentality which rejects knowledge and rebels against its principles and restraints.

Conclusion
On certain characteristic of the Prophet (pbuh) and the merits of visiting his mosque and tomb

The Messenger of God (pbuh) was dressed for burial in three tunics, none of which included a coat of mail or armored headgear. He was then placed on his bed at the edge of the grave, and people entered in successive groups to pray over him without being led by an imam. The first to pray over the Prophet (pbuh) was al-'Abbas, who was followed by Banu Hashim, then the Emigrants, the Helpers, and the rest of the people. The Messenger of God (pbuh) was buried in the same place where he died, namely, in A'ishah's living quarters.

The Prophet (pbuh) was survived by nine wives: Sawdah, A'ishah, Hafsah, Umm Habibah, Umm Salamah, Zaynab Bint Jahsh, Juwayriyah, Safiyah, and Maymunah. Of the Prophet's wives, A'ishah was the only one who had not been married before.

The Prophet (pbuh) was the father of three sons: al-Qasim (from whom he took his agnomen), who was born prior to the Prophet's calling and who died when he was two years old; 'Abdullah, born after the Prophet's calling, who was known as al-Tayyib and al-Tahir[459]; and Ibrahim, who was born in Medina in 8 A.H. and died there two years later. He (pbuh) also had four daughters: Zaynab, Fatimah, Ruqayyah, and Umm Kulthum. Ruqayyah died on the day the Battle of Badr was fought, in the month of Ramadan, 2 A.H., and Umm Kulthum died in the month of Sha'ban, 9 A.H.; both of them were married to 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan.[460]

He (pbuh) was the most generous of all people, especially during the month of Ramadan, and he was the best of all people in both physical and moral constitution. He had the softest of palms, he gave off the most pleasant aroma, and he offered the most amiable companionship. In addition, he (pbuh) was, of all people, the most full of reverent fear of the Divine; he never became angry over an offense against him personally, nor would he have sought revenge for such. Rather, he would become angry only if God's sacred commands had been violated, in which case, nothing could stand in the face of his fury until he had caused the truth to prevail. It was the Qur'an which formed his inward character, and he was a man of great humility who responded to the needs of his family and lowered a protective wing over the weak and defenseless. An intensely diffident person, he (pbuh) never once spoke critically of food placed before him; rather, if he found food appetizing, he partook of it, otherwise he did not. When he took a meal, he never did so while reclining on a cushion or seated at a table. However, he was fond of sweet things and honey, and he had a particular predilection for dried figs. One or two months might go by without a fire being kindled in any of his households; however, although he was willing to receive gifts, he would never accept charity. He used to repair his own sandals and mend his own clothes, visiting the sick and responding to the invitations of rich and poor alike. His bed was made of leather stuffed with plant fibers, and he made it a point to possess very little in the way of worldly goods. God had offered him the keys to the treasure houses of the entire earth; however, he refused them, contenting himself instead with the wealth of the life to come. He was in constant remembrance of God and his mind was never idle. Even so, he often laughed and smiled, and he knew how to engage in banter while continuing to speak nothing but the truth. He kept his Companions united and he honored the honorable of every tribe, placing them in responsibility over

their peoples' affairs. In a sound hadith going back to Malik Ibn Anas, may God be pleased with him, Malik states, "Never did I feel a piece of silk smoother than the palm of the Prophet's hand, nor did I smell an aroma sweeter than his. I served the Messenger of God (pbuh) for ten years without once hearing him say, 'Uff!'[461] Never once, seeing something I had done, did he say, 'Why did you do that?' and never once, concerning something I had not done, did he say, 'Why did you not do that?'"

It has been a point of agreement among Muslims of all ages that visiting the Prophet's mosque and tomb is a significant means of drawing near to God Almighty. The only person who took exception to this consensus was Ibn Taymiyah, may God forgive him, who held that visiting the Prophet's tomb is wrongful. As for the evidence in favor of the majority view, it consists in several different points which we summarize as follows:

One: The legitimacy and desirability of visiting tombs in general. As mentioned previously, the Prophet (pbuh) used to go every night to the al-Baqi' graveyard in order to greet those whose bodies lay there, pray for them, and ask God to forgive their sins. This is a fact recorded in sound hadiths, many of which speak in detail about this matter. Moreover, since the tomb of the Messenger of God (pbuh) must necessarily be included among tombs in general, the ruling which applies to them must also apply to his.

Two: The fact that all of the Companions and their Successors used to visit the Prophet's tomb and greet him (pbuh) there whenever they passed by the blessed Rawdah. Reports confirming this practice have been narrated by scholars and erudite leaders of the Muslim community, including Ibn Taymiyah, may he rest in peace.

Three: Well-established reports that many of the Companions visited his (pbuh) tomb, among them Bilal, may God be pleased with him,[462] without this causing them any ill effects or subjecting them to criticism or condemnation.

Four: The account narrated with a sound chain of transmission by Imam Ahmad, may God be pleased with him, according to which when the Prophet (pbuh) was bidding farewell to Mu'adh Ibn Jabal as he departed for Yemen, he (pbuh) told Mu'adh, "You may not meet me again after this year! Instead, you may simply pass by my mosque and visit my grave." The Arabic word la'alla, rendered here as "may," in most contexts is expressive of a request, and particularly if it is followed, as here, by the Arabic particle an. Hence, this statement actually conveys a wish on the part of the Prophet (pbuh) that when Mu'adh returned to Medina, he would pass by his mosque and tomb to pay his respects to him.[463]

One may thus rest assured that there is no justification for Ibn Taymiyah's isolated claim that visiting the Prophet's tomb is illegitimate! Even so, let us examine the primary texts upon which he bases his point of view, namely, the hadiths in which the Prophet (pbuh) states: (1) "Do not set out for any but three mosques: the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, this mosque of mine (in Medina), and al-Aqsá Mosque (in Jerusalem)," (2) "God's curse is upon the Jews and the Christians (who) make the graves of their prophets into places of worship," and (3) "Do not treat my tomb as a holiday site."

None of these three traditions contains anything which could serve as a basis for Ibn Taymiyah's opinion, for the following reasons:

One: If one examines the grammatical structure of the Arabic in the Prophet's statement rendered, "Do not set out for any but three mosques," one notes that the construction used is that referred to as, "an exception made void (of government)," that is, an exception in which the general term from which the exception is made (that is, all mosques) is omitted from the sentence. In such a case, the category from which the exception has been made is identified on the basis of that which is excepted (in this case, the three mosques mentioned). Otherwise, the entities being excepted would belong to a category that entirely from the category from which the exception is made, in which case we have a "metaphorical exception."

However, one must not construe an exception as metaphorical unless a literal interpretation has been ruled out.

With these considerations in mind, we may say that the fuller meaning of this hadith is, "Do not set out on a journey for any mosque except for three of them...." With this reading, the category from which the exception has been made is that of mosques, and what it means is that all mosques enjoy equal merit except for these three. Where other mosques are concerned, there is no basis for preferring one over any other if, for example, one desires to visit a mosque or seclude oneself in a mosque for contemplation and worship. Given this interpretation, scholars have stated that if someone has made a vow to seclude himself for worship and prayer and names a particular mosque in which he intends to carry out his vow, and if the mosque named is other than the three specified in this hadith, he could fulfill his vow with equal validity in some other mosque as well.

However, the matter under discussion here, namely, visiting the Prophet's tomb, is included neither in the category from which an exception has been made – namely, mosques – nor in the specific group of mosques which have been excepted. Hence, the hadith cited by Ibn Taymiyah has nothing to do with the question at hand. It is similary to saying, "Do not set out to visit your relatives or to learn from this or that scholar," then seeking to apply this to the question of whether one should visit this or that mosque!

We might also ask: Did Ibn Taymiyah understand the Arabic phrase, shadd al-rihal in its literal sense, namely, that of strapping the saddle on one's camel or other mount, then setting out on a journey? Or did he take the phrase metaphorically, understanding it simply as a reference to the intention one makes to accomplish something? If he understood the phrase literally, then the hadith cited here cannot be taken to forbid visits to mosques other than the three specified unless the person making the visit actually saddles up his mount and rides it to the mosque of his choice, be it near or distant, whereas if he reaches the mosque by some other means, the prohibition no longer applies. And what reasonable person would accept such an interpretation?

However, if Ibn Taymiyah understood the phrase shadd al-rihal in its metaphorical sense, namely, that of heading toward a particular place with the intention of reaching this place and no other, then the practice adopted by the Messenger of God (pbuh) himself stands opposed to Ibn Taymiyah's point of view. For it is related that he (pbuh) used to visit the Quba' Mosque, which was located outside Medina, every week – some say every Saturday.

In sum, then, we have observed that the category from which an exception is made in this hadith is mosques, while visits to relatives, tombs, living people, and important sites are not included in this category and are, therefore, not addressed by it. As for the meaning of the hadith, it indicates simply that the mosques most worthy of interest and the intent to visit them from distant locations are these three: the Prophet's mosque in Medina, the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, and al-Aqsá Mosque in Jerusalem.

Two: The Prophet's saying, "God's curse is upon the Jews and the Christians (who) make the graves of their prophets into places of worship" has nothing whatsoever to do with the matter of visiting tombs. Rather, as we noted above, it is a prohibition against making the tombs of prophets and the areas surrounding them into places for prayer. This is clear from his (pbuh) use of the Arabic word, masajid, which means, literally, a place of prostration, that is, worship. If a mere visit to a tomb were tantamount to making it into a place of worship, then when the Prophet (pbuh) went to the graveyard at al-Baqi', he thereby turned the entire site into a mosque for himself, since he visited it with great regularity.

Three: As for his (pbuh) saying, "Do not treat my tomb as a holiday site," it means that we are not to limit visits to his tomb to a specific time of year as we do with holiday rites associated with particular days or months. This is the interpretation offered by al-Hafié al-Mundhiri and other hadith scholars. Given this explanation of the statement under discussion, one might understand it also to be a tacit prohibition of

loud merrymaking, entertainment, and fancy adornments of the sort one finds associated with some holidays. However, to take these words as a ban on visiting the Prophet's tomb is to miss the point entirely. After all, what sense would it have made for him (pbuh) to forbid people to make his tomb into a "holiday site" in this sense, then proceed himself to visit the tombs at al-Baqi' every day of the year?

In addition, be aware that if God should bless you with the opportunity to visit the Prophet's tomb, there is a certain code of etiquette, as it were, which one should adhere to. Make it your intention to visit his mosque, then his honorable tomb. Before entering Medina, take a ritual bath and put on your best clothes. As you enter the city, bring to mind the fact that God honored this geographical spot with the presence of the quintessential human being, and when you enter the mosque, go first to the Rawdah[464] and perform two cycles of prayer as a greeting of peace to the mosque, standing between the pulpit and the tomb. When, following this, you approach the tomb, beware of rushing toward it, clinging to the windows, or rubbing up against them as is the practice of so many ignorant visitors. Such behavior is a heretical innovation which borders on the taboo. Instead, stand about three meters from the tomb, looking with a sense of reverence and awe toward the bottom of the tomb wall which faces you. Then greet the Messenger of God (pbuh) in a soft voice, saying, "I bear witness that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger. I bear witness that you, Muhammad, faithfully delivered the message which you had been given by your Lord, that you guided your people, calling them to follow the path of your Lord with prudence and sound admonitions, and that you continued to worship your Lord until you breathed your last. So may God grant abundant blessings and peace to you, your family, and your Companions in accordance with His good pleasure."

After this, turn toward the qiblah and move slightly toward the right until you are between the tomb and the column located at one end of it, lifting your hands in humble supplication to God.There is no need to suppose that this represents incivility toward the Messenger of God (pbuh), as if it would be preferable to offer your supplication as you face his tomb. After all, supplication is addressed to God, and words spoken to God must be spoken to Him alone. Hence, the best direction one can face when making supplication to God is that of the qiblah. Nor should you allow your attention to be drawn to the many unenlightened people who will be violating this advice all around you. Begin your supplication by saying: O God, You have spoken and Your words are truth: "And if, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you (O Muhammad), and asked forgiveness of God and the Messenger asked forgiveness for them, they would have assuredly found God accepting repentance and Merciful" (Qur'an 4: 64). I have come seeking forgiveness for my sins and the mediation of Your Messenger. I ask You to grant me forgiveness as You did to those who approached him (pbuh) during his life on earth." Then offer as many requests of your own as you wish, for yourself, your family, and Muslims everywhere.

And do not forget to make supplication for me as well. Say, "O God, when you gather all human beings on that Day of which there can be no doubt, clothe your derelict servant, Muhammad Sa'id Ibn Mulla Ramadan in the beautiful raiment of Your concealment and protection. Grant him Your bounty and grace along with those of Your servants who have been forgiven their trespasses. Grant him a refreshing sip from the pool of Your Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on the day when he stands at its edge with his face full of radiance and joy, receiving both those Companions whom he recognizes from his days on earth and the brethren whom he has not seen but for whom he yearns. O God, let him not be among those who will be cast out and deprived of Your blessed presence!"

This is a pledge which God Almighty will question you about, brother and sister Muslims, whoever you may be – the promise to pray for your brother once you have completed this book, for I stand in the direst need of the heartfelt prayers of brothers and sisters whom I have never seen.

I praise and thank God for enabling me to complete the writing of this book, and I beg Him in all humility to help me hold fast to the Sunnah of his beloved Chosen One (pbuh). At the same time, I ask Him to

overlook in His mercy any errors or shortcomings in this work, and to allow the purity of my intentions and the effort I have expended toward its completion to act as my advocate before Him.

And now, may God grant His blessings and peace to our master Muhammad, the unlettered Prophet, and to all of his family and Companions.

Praise be to God, the Sustainer of the Worlds.

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Abstract

This book highlights the significance of studying the prophetic biography for understanding Islam and the scholary metyhod of narrating it.

It tackles the period from the prophet's birth to his mission,so it mentions his lineage,birth and suck؛his journey to syria؛his laboring for provision, his trading with Khadijah's wealth,his marriage to her, his participation in building the Ka'bah, his seclusion in Hira' Cave and the start of the Revelation.

The next part handles the part of his biography from the Revelation to the Emigration deciding the stages of the Islamic Call in the Prophet's life which start with the secret call and is followed by the proclaimed Call, which leads to the stage at which he (pbuh) suffered a great deal of harm .

Then it leads the principles of the policy of negotiation , the first emigration in Islam and its denotations, the first delegation to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) from outside Mecca for understanding Islam, the year of sorrow, the Messenger's emigration to Ta'if, the miracle of the Night Journey (Isra') and the Ascension (Mi'raj), the Prophets presenting himself to the tribes and how the Ansar started to embrace Islam.It discusses the first and second 'Aqabah Pledges of Allegiance and mentions the difference between both,Jihad and its legitimacy, the Companions' start to emigrate to Medina and the emigrations of the Prophet (pbuh).

After that, it talks about the foundations of the new society in Holy Medina represented by building the mosque, fraternizing Muslims, writing the document, and then the stage of the defensive war, the Messenger's expeditions and the denotions of each, Hudaybiyah reconciliation, al-Ridwan pledge of allegiance, the squadrons bearing the mission of the Call to Islam he (pbuh) sent to the tribes of Arabia and sending letters to the world kings and presidents to invite them to islam. Then it talks about the compensatory minor pilgrimage, Mu'tah Expedition , the Conquest of Mecca, Hunayn Expedition , Tabuk Expedition and the denotations of all. Next, it handles Abu Bakr's leading people to pilgrimage in 9 AH, the mosque of sedition, the entry of the delegations of Thaqif and other tribes into Islam, the polite manners of the Islamic Call, the farwell pilgrimage, the oratory therein and the Prophet's reunion with the celestial Companion.

Finally, it deals with the Rightly Guided Caliphate and talks about the most significant events that took place during the reign of each caliph.

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[1] The term Sunnah refers to all of the customs and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which have become models to be followed by Muslims (translator's note)

[2] The Arabic word hadith refers to a tradition of the Prophet (pbuh). Such traditions, which go to make up the prophetic Sunnah, may consist of one of his sayings, an action which he performed, or his silent approval of an action performed by someone else. After the Qur'an, the traditions form the second source for the teachings of Islam (t.n).

[3] See the introduction to Ibn Sayyid al-Nas's book, 'Uyun al-Athar, which deals with Ibn Ishaq and his biography.

[4] Wafayat al-A'yan, 1:290, The Maymaniyah Press.

[5] This is a reference to the following works Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, and the Sunan of Ibn Majah, al-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud, and al-

Tirmidhi (t.n).

[6] See The Memoirs of Lord Cromer, as well as Dr. Muhammad Muhammad Husayn's book, Al-Ittijahat al-Wahaniyah fi al-Adab al-Hadith.

[7] See the more detailed discussion of this topic in my book, "Kubrá al-Yaqiniyat al-Kawniyah".

[8] See al-Shahristani's Al-Milal wa-al-Nihal, 2: 86-87.

[9] Madha Khasir al-Alam bi-Inhihah al-Muslimin.

[10] Al-Ummah al-'Arabiyah fi Ma'rakat Tahqiq al-Dhat, p. 147.

[11] This is an agreed upon hadith, the wording being that of Muslim.

[12] In the commentary to his translation of the Holy Qur'an, The Message of the Qur'an, Muhammad Asad notes that the word "islam" in its original connotation meant simply "man's self-surrender" to God (p. 69, Note 13) and that, correspondingly, the term "muslim" refers to "one who surrenders himself to God". He states, "Both these terms are applied in the Qur'an to all who believe in the One God and affirm this belief by an unequivocal acceptance of His revealed messages" (p. 518, Note 94). In a further expansion on this theme, Asad writes, "It should be borne in mind that the 'institutionalized' use of these terms – that is, their exclusive application to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad – represents a definitely post-Qur'anic development and, hence, must be avoided in a translation of the Qur'an" (p. 886, Note 17). It is on this basis that the various references to "surrender to God" in the Qur'anic passages which follow are, in fact, renderings of the words "islam" and "muslim" in the Arabic (t.n).

[13] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:67. Both Muslim and al-Bukhari relate on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said, "I saw 'Amr Ibn Luhayy Ibn Qam'ah Ibn Khunduf drawing his viscera through the fire," with only slight variations in the wording. See also Ibn al-Kalbi's, Kitab al-Asnam ("The Book of Idols"), pp. 8-9.

[14] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:77. See also Ibn al-Kalbi's, Kitab al-Aônam, pp. 8-9.

[15] The Structure of Religious Thought, p. 58.

[16] One may find the story of the seeking out of a wet nurse for the Prophet (pbuh) in the steppes of the Banu Sa'd and the report concerning the opening of his breast in Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1/64; see also Sahih Muslim, 1/101-102.

[17] Al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Manaqib, 9/236.

[18] This privilege was shared during the pre-Islamic era by members of the Quraysh tribe, with each person contributing whatever wealth he had at his disposal for the purchase of food and wine for those who had come to perform the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.

[19] There is wide agreement among imams and scholars of jurisprudence that it is a desirable practice to seek intercession on the part of individuals known for their righteousness and devotion to God, including the household of the Prophet (pbuh), whether one's prayer is for rain or something else. See Fathh al-Bari (fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari by Ibn iajar al-'Asqalani, 2/339; Nayl al-Awhar by Muhammad Ibn 'Ali al-Shawkani 2/7, and Subul al-Salam ("Ways of Peace") by Muhammad Ibn Isma'il al-Yamani al-San'ani, 2/134, and Al-Mughni by Ibn Qudamah al-Hanbali, 2/265.

[20] Sahih Muslim, 1/101-102, where the incident is reported to have occurred more than once.

[21] This is an abbreviated version of the account found in Ibn Hisham's Sirah (1/180). It is related by al-Tabari in his Tarikh ("History"), 2/287, by al-Bayhaqi in his Sunan, and by Abu Na'im in Hilyat al-Awliya', with slight variations in detail among these accounts. Al-Tirmidhi relates an extended account which differs significantly from the others and whose chain of authorities is weak in spots. He himself adds, "This is a 'good' hadith (one whose narrators do not approach in moral excellence those of the sound, or sahih traditions – t.n); however, it is somewhat peculiar, and unknown to us except in this form." Its chain of authorities includes 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Ghazwan, about whom Ibn Hajar says in his Al-Mizan, "He has related some hadiths which are unreliable." Ibn Hajar then adds, "The most unreliable hadith attributed to him is one based on the authority of Yunus Ibn Abi Ishaq concerning the Prophet's (pbuh) journey to Syria as an adolescent with Abu Talib." Ibn Sayyid al-Nas notes in his 'Uyun al-Athar, 1/43 that the text of this hadith contains elements which are not reliable. The strange thing is that in his exegesis of the hadiths found in al-Ghazali's Fiqh al-Sirah, Shaykh Nasir al-Din al-Albani states – despite what we have just noted – that "its chain of authorities is sound." He quotes nothing of al-Tirmidhi's comment on it except for the words, "This is a good hadith . . .", and this despite the fact that it is customary for him to cast doubt on the validity of hadiths which are far better attested than this one. As for the elements of the story which are common to the various narrators, they have been passed down through numerous trustworthy channels, and suffer from no weakness.

[22] Related by al-Bukhari.

[23] This is related by Ibn al-Athir and by al-Hakim on the authority of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Al-Hakim states that this hadith is sound based on Muslim's criteria. It is also related by al-Tabarani on the authority of 'Ammar Ibn Yasir.

[24] The Arabic word kitabi refers to any adherent of the two monotheistic religions which preceded the coming of the Prophet (pbuh); it is known, however, from other sources, that 'Abdullah Ibn Salam was a Jew (t.n).

[25] Related by Ibn Sayyid al-Nas in 'Uyun al-Athar, Ibn Hajar (al-'Asqalani) in Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah ("The Precise Distinctions Among the Companions"), and others. There has been disagreement as to which of the two men was Khadijah's first husband; however, it is judged most probable by Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, as well as Qatadah and Ibn Ishaq, that the first was, in fact, 'Atiq Ibn 'A'idh and the second, Hind Ibn Zurarah.

[26] According to Muslim's account, the first pronoun "its" refers to "Heaven's", while the second refers to "Earth's". According to al-Tibi, the first "its" refers to the nation to which Maryam belonged, whereas the second refers to this, i.e., the Muslim, nation. See also Fath al-Bari, 7/91.

[27] An agreed-upon hadith, the wording being that of Muslim.

[28] An izar is a sheet-like garment worn below the waist (t.n).

[29] Sahih al-Bukhari, in the section of hadiths relating to the prophets under the heading, " . . . God chose Abraham to be (His) beloved friend" (Qur'an 4:125).

[30] See al-Zarkashi's I'lam al-Sajid, 46.

[31] 'Uyun al-Athar, 1/52.

[32] This is related by al-Bukhari in the section on the Pilgrimage, under the heading "The Virtues of Mecca." See al-Zarkashi's I'lam al-Sajid, 46.

[33] An agreed upon hadith, the wording being that of Muslim.

[34] See 'Uyun al-Athar, 1/53 and I'lam al-Sajid, 46. This hadith is found in Sahih Muslim, 2:69, under the heading "The Razing and Rebuilding of the Ka'bah." According to the accounts of al-Tabari and others, the Ka'bah caught on fire as a result of a spark which reached it from a fire that had been set around it. See al-Tabari's Tarikh, 5/498.

[35] Sahih Muslim, 4/99.

[36] According to al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, and the commentary in Fath al-Bari on al-Bukhari, the person who began to raze the Ka'bah was Harun al-Rashid, whereas the writers of 'Uyun al-Athar and I'lam al-Sajid hold that it was Ja'far al-Mansur. It is a known fact that Malik, may he rest in peace, was a contemporary of both al-Mansur and Harun al-Rashid; hence, either of the two views may be correct.

[37] Al-Shahibi, Al-Muwafaqat, 2/141; see also my book, Dawabih al-Maslahah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah, pp. 111-112.

[38] See Fath al-Bari, 1/21.

[39] See iaHadir al-'Alam al-Islami, 1/38-39.

[40] Al-èahirah al-Qur'aniyah, p. 127.

[41] After being kidnapped as a young boy during the pre-Islamic era, Zayd Ibn Harithah was bought as a slave by Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, who then gave him to the Prophet (pbuh) as a gift when they married. Prior to his calling, the Prophet (pbuh) adopted Zayd, gave him his freedom, and arranged his marriage to his (pbuh) paternal cousin. People continued to refer to Zayd as "Muhammad's son" until he (pbuh) received the Qur'anic verse, "(As for your adopted children) call them by the names of their fathers" (Qur'an 33:5).

[42] See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:249-261, where there is a more extended treatment of this topic.

[43] Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam, 1:95; see also my Dawabih al-Maslahah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah, 261.

[44] For the details of this story, see Itmam al-Wafa' fi Sirat al-Khulafa' by Muhammad al-Khudri.

[45] An agreed-upon hadith.

[46] An agreed-upon hadith, its wording being that of Muslim.

[47] This is along the north wall of the Ka'bah (t.n).

[48] Related by al-Bukhari.

[49] See al-Tabari's Tarikh, 2:344, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:158.

[50] For more details on the persecutions suffered by the Messenger of God (pbuh) and his Companions at the hands of the polytheists, see Sirat Ibn Hisham or the abridged version thereof, al-Khudari's Nur al-Yaqin ("The Light of Certainty"), and other books on the prophetic biography.

[51] Narrated by al-Bukhari; see also Ibn Kathir's commentary on these two verses.

[52] This is the correct figure based on Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:330; see also Fath al-Bari 7:130.

[53] See Al-Qurhubi's commentary, 5:35, and Ibn 'Arabi's Ahkam al-Qur'an, 2:887.

[54] According to an account narrated by Muslim, the Emperor of Abyssinia was among those who believed in the Messenger of God (pbuh), and when he died, the Messenger of God (pbuh) announced his death to the Companions, then led them out to the mosque, where he prayed for his departed spirit.

[55] This hadith was narrated by Ibn Ishaq, Muqatil, and al-Tabari on the authority of Sa'id Ibn Jubayr. See also the commentaries on this passage by Ibn Kathir, al-Qurhubi, and al-Naysaburi.

[56] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 1:196.

[57] See the details of this account in Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:420.

[58] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 1:196, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:381.

[59] Wahi al-Qalam, 2:30.

[60] Al-Bukhari, 6:73.

[61] Fath al-Bari, 8:473.

[62] See 'Uyun al-Athar by Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, 1:118, and Fath al-Bari, 8:473.

[63] The account of the Prophet's night journeys may be found in the Sahihs of Muslim and al-Bukhari, or in any other reliable source of the prophetic Tradition. However, one must beware of relying upon a book such as The Mi'raj by Ibn 'Abbas, which is full of lies and distortions,

and which is falsely attributed to Ibn ‘Abbas.

[64] Dr. Shibli Shumayl uses this expression in his introduction to the Arabic translation of Beckner’s book explaining Darwin’s theory of evolution.

[65] The word “undisputed” here is my rendering of the Arabic term mutawatir, which describes hadiths which have been handed down by numerous, distinct chains of narrators and which have always been accepted as authentic and genuine (t.n).

[66] See al-Zarqani’s commentary on al-Muwahha’, 1:65.

[67] See Ibn Kathir’s commentary, 4:261.

[68] One such writer is Muhammad Husayn Haykal, the author of The Life of Muhammad, who showed himself to be strangely off balance as he attempted to escape the necessary consequences of these and similar hadiths, lest he upset his own tranquil confidence in the fanciful theory he had devised about Muhammad (pbuh).

[69] Al-Nawawi, on Muslim’s Sahih, 2:390.

[70] Fath al-Bari ‘alá Sahih al-Bukhari, 7:126-127.

[71] The Arabic term Ansar, which means “helpers” or “supporters,” refers to those who granted refuge to the Prophet (pbuh) after his emigration from Mecca to Medina (t.n).

[72] Ibn Sa‘d, al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá1:200-201 ,:1; a similar account is narrated by Ibn Ishaq. See also Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:422.

[73] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:425, and Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:350.

[74] There were six men in the group: As‘ad Ibn Zurarah, ‘Awf Ibn al-Harith, Rafi‘ Ibn Malik, Quhbah Ibn ‘Amir, ‘Uqbah Ibn ‘Amir, and Jabir Ibn ‘Abdullah.

[75] This account is narrated by Ibn Ishaq on the authority of Asim Ibn ‘Umar, who received the account from chieftains of his tribe. See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:428.

[76] This account is narrated by al-Bukhari in his section on “Hadiths Concerning the Prophets” under the heading, “Delegations of the Ansar and the Pledge of al-‘Aqabah”; it is also narrated by Muslim in his section on “Prescribed Punishments.” A great deal has been written about ‘Ubadah’s participation in this pledge; for further details, see the commentary on this hadith in Fath al-Bari.

[77] Fath al-Bari, 7:156, and Zad al-Ma‘ad fi Hadith Khayr al-‘Ibad by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawaziyyah, 2:50. See also al-Fath al-Rabbani fi Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 20:269.

[78] The Current State of the Islamic World, 1:33.

[79] Mukhtasar Sirat al-Rasul, 124.

[80] Zad al-Ma‘ad, the Aleppo Edition, 2:50.

[81]) Muslim, 3:48; see also Ibn Hajar’s al-Isabah, 3:403.

[82] The days of al-tashriq are the three days which follow the feast of sacrifice at Mina during the hajj (the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Dhu al-Hijjah), and during which the pilgrim rests in Mecca after completing the rites of the hajj (t.n).

[83] Sirat Ibn Hisham, the Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and al-Tabari, all of whom base their accounts on Ibn Ishaq, who in turn relies on the authority of Ma‘bad Ibn Ka‘b Ibn Malik.

[84] Al-Nasa’i, 2:52, and Ibn Kathir’s commentary, 3:224.

[85] An agreed-upon hadith.

[86] One may read about this theory in Al-Siyadah al-‘Arabiyah (“Arab Sovereignty”) by Von Vloten, Al-Nahdah al-Misriyah Edition, pp. 5ff.

[87] Athar al-Harb fi al-Fiqh al-Islami, p. 59

[88] Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 1:210-211, and Tarikh al-Tabari, 1:367.

[89] Usd al-Ghabah, 4:58.

[90] The “abode of war” (dar al-harb), a phrase used in contradistinction to “abode of peace” (dar al-islam) referred to above, refers to those countries which are under the rule of infidels (t.n).

[91] Tafsir al-Qurhubi, 5:350.

[92] Ibn al-‘Arabi, Ahkam al-Qur’an, 2:876.

[93] Lest the reader understand the author’s intent in too harsh a light, it bears noting that in his commentary on this verse, translator Muhammad Asad comments, “The fact of their being bent on denying the truth of the divine message constitutes, as it were, a common denominator between them, and precludes the possibility of their ever being real friends to the believers. This refers, of course, to relations among communities, and not necessarily between individuals; hence my rendering of the term awliya’, in this context, as “allies.” (t.n)

[94] Ibid.

[95] Al-Bukhari, 4:255.

[96] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:155, and Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 212.

[97] According to Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, she tore the sash in two, then tied one half of it around the bag proper, and the other half around the mouth of the bag, and for this reason, she is called Dhat al-Nihaqayn, or “the one with the two sashes.”

[98] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:488, and Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 20:282.

[99] An agreed-upon hadith.

[100] Muruj al-Dhahab, 2:279, Beirut Edition.

[101] A mirbad is a place where dates are dried.

[102] It is not stated here with whom the Prophet (pbuh) holds "intimate communion" However, it could possibly be the numerous visitors he was accustomed to receiving, or perhaps the Angel Gabriel, may peace be upon him (t.n).

[103] Ibn Hajar, Al-Isabah, 1:405, Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:479, and Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 20:292.

[104] Muslim, 7:105.

[105] An agreed-upon hadith.

[106] Muslim, 1:83.

[107] Writing in criticism of the hadiths chosen by Professor Muhammad al-Muntasir al-Kittani for students in the college of Shari'ah, Sheikh Nasir al-Albani once expressed the view that such hadiths as these serve no useful purpose in this age. As for us, we view his words as a dangerous statement which should not be uttered by any Muslim. All of the Prophet's sayings, deeds, and expressions of approval (of sayings and deeds of others) are, in essence, a form of legislation, and such legislation remains valid until the Day of Judgment unless it is abrogated by a divine writ or a sound, reliable text from the Sunnah. Moreover, one of the most significant benefits of such legislation is the knowledge of those precepts which apply to our lives and the necessity of abiding by them. As for these sound, uncontestable hadiths, they have been abrogated by no divine writ or Sunnah; hence, their legislative content is to be considered valid until the Day of Resurrection. What this means is that there is no reason not to engage in the practice of seeking blessing through objects associated with the Prophet (pbuh) or, by extension, through his blessed person and his high standing with God Almighty. Hence, if such a practice has remained valid with the passage of time, how can it then be stated that the hadiths which pertain to it are of no value in the present day?

[108] This account is narrated by al-Bukhari, 4:258, and by Ibn Sa'd in al-Tabaqat, 2:4. See also I'lam al-Sajid fi Ahkam al-Masajid, by al-Zarkashi, p. 222, as well as other books dealing with the life of the Prophet (pbuh). Al-Bukhari does not mention that he (pbuh) bought the land from them for ten dinars. However, we read in Fath al-Bari that "Musá Ibn 'Uqbah relates that he (pbuh) bought it from them for ten dinars, while al-Waqidi adds that Abu Bakr paid them the money on his (the Prophet's) behalf.

[109] Al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, 2:5.

[110] Al-Bukhari, 1:111.

[111] I'lam al-Sajid, 224-225.

[112] I'lam al-Sajid, 222.

[113] Fath al-Bari fi Sharh al-Bukhari, 8:175.

[114] I'lam al-Sajid, 236.

[115] This is the view held by jurisprudents of the Shafi'i school; however, those of the Hanafi school and others allow such an action if it is required for the well-being of the Muslim community.

[116] I'lam al-Sajid, 227.

[117] See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 1:504, and al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, 3:2.

[118] This hadith is narrated by al-Bukhari in his section on "Exegesis," 5:178.

[119] See Fath al-Bari, 7:191.

[120] See Ibn Sayyid al-Nas's, 'Uyun al-Athar, 1:198.

[121] See Imam Ahmad's Musnad, 21:10, al-Banna's commentary.

[122] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:238.

[123] Ibn Hisham narrates this hadith in his Sirah on the authority of Ishaq, who received it from men of the tribe of Banu Salamah; hence, Ibn Hisham's narrative is based on an unknown chain of narrators. In the account of the Battle of Badr found in Al-Isabah, al-iafié Ibn Hajar mentions the same hadith on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, on the authority of Yazid Ibn Ruman, on the authority of 'Urwah Ibn al-Zubayr, and others. This is a sound chain of transmission, since al-Hafié Ibn Hajar is reliable in what he narrates and transmits from others. (See Al-Isabah, 1:302)

[124] Muslim, 6:170.

[125] Ibn Hisham, 1:205; and Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:87. The account of the Prophet's praying to his Lord for aid before the Battle of Badr is an agreed-upon hadith.

[126] The account of the angels being sent to support the Muslims in battle is an agreed-upon hadith.

[127] Al-Bukhari, 5:8; see also Muslim, 8:163, which contains a similar hadith.

[128] It bears noting here that this same verse has been taken to mean the very opposite of the interpretation favored by the author. In a footnote on his English translation of this verse, Muhammad Asad states, "The reference in the above verse to the 'tremendous chastisement' that might have befallen the Muslims 'but for the decree (kitab) from God that had already gone forth' – i.e., a course of action fore-ordained in God's knowledge – makes it clear that the killing of the captives would have been an awesome sin." (The Message of the Qur'an, Translated and

Explained by Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1984, 251; t.n)

[129] Sahih Muslim, 5:157-158.

[130] Al-Jami‘ li Ahkam al-Qur’an, 4:252.

[131] According to the version related by al-Bukhari, the Prophet (pbuh) said, “I saw Gabriel taking hold of the reins of his steed and bearing an instrument of war.” See Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:14.

[132] The Arabic term ijtihad refers to the act of reaching an independent judgment on a legal question based on the interpretation and application of the four foundations of jurisprudence, namely, the Qur’an, the Sunnah, analogy (qiyas), and consensus (ijma‘) (t.n).

[133] See Sharh al-Luma‘ fi Usul al-Fiqh by Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, 824.

[134] Al-Asnawi, Nihayat al-Sul: Sharh Minhaj ‘Ilm al-Usul li- al-Baydawi, 4:537.

[135] Abu Dawud, cited in Jam‘ al-Fawa’id min Jami‘ al-Usul wa Majma‘ al-Zawa’id, by ‘Abdullah Hashim al-Yamani al-Madani, 2:90.

[136] Muslim, 5:158.

[137] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:47.

[138] Al-Tabari, 2:480, and Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 3:67.

[139] The muhrim is a person in a state of ritual consecration for the pilgrimage to Mecca (t.n).

[140] Al-Bukhari, 3:146, and Al-Muwatta’, 1:328.

[141] A “strange man” would be anyone who is not a mahram, that is, a near relative whom it would be unlawful for the woman to marry (t.n).

[142] The Ahabish are thus named because the men of the tribes of Banu al-Mustaliq and Banu al-Hawn Ibn Khuzaymah had met with the Qurayshites at the mountain of Hubshi near Mecca to conclude an alliance, swearing to come to one another’s aid against all others “as long as hubshi remains in its place” (Lisan al-‘Arab) (t.n).

[143] This hadith is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Imam Ahmad, and al-Tabari includes a similar account. See Sirat Ibn Hisham,2:62, Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:500, and Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 22:52.

[144] Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 3:87, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:62.

[145] Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:31.

[146] Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 3:80; Ibn Ishaq (2:65) relates a similar account.

[147] Ibn Sa‘d, 3:80; Ibn Hisham’s account is similar to this, as is al-Bukhari’s (5:29).

[148] Ibn Hisham, 1:233; a similar account is narrated by Muslim on the authority of Hammad Ibn Salamah, with the exception that Muslim’s account does not include, “This gait is odious to God . . .” (see Sahih Muslim, 7:15).

[149] Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, 3:83; the same account is narrated by al-Bukhari on the authority of al-Bara’ in his section on jihad: 5:28.

[150] An agreed-upon hadith which has been passed down in a number of similar versions.

[151] An agreed-upon hadith.

[152] Al-Bukhari, 5:33.

[153] Al-Bukhari, 5:49.

[154] Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d, Sirat Ibn Hisham, and Tarikh al-Tabari.

[155] It might be said: Those who offered to fight with the Muslims were Jews, who are People of the Book. So how could the Messenger of God (pbuh) have referred to them as idolaters (Arabic, mushrikin)? The answer to this query is that the term “idolaters” is applied here to the Jews in a sense which differs from that intended when speaking of the pagan Arabs. It must be borne in mind that the Arabic term shirk, generally rendered in English as “polytheism” or “idolatry,” bears the more inclusive meaning of “associating created beings with God.” As such, shirk is a characteristic held in common among all those who deny the truth about God.

[156] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:221.

[157] See our discussion of this point in Section One.

[158] An agreed-upon hadith.

[159] For more details on this subject, see my book entitled, Tajribat al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah fi Mizan al-Bahth (“The Islamic Educational Experiment Under Study”).

[160] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 1:349.

[161] Although only six men are mentioned here as having been sent out, some accounts tell us that there were ten: six Emigrants and four Helpers. This would explain how, although only six men’s names are given here, it would be possible for three men to have been left alive after Asim and six others were slain (see Ibn Hisham, Vol. 3, p. 169, Note 2, Al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyah, Beirut) (t.n).

[162] Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:41.

[163] See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:172.

[164] Al-Bukhari, 5:43.

[165] See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:173; the account concerning the Prophet’s devotion to morning prayers and his calling down affliction upon the

tribes of Sulaym is narrated by both al-Bukhari and Muslim.

[166] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:239.

[167] See Nihayat al-Muhtaj fi Sharh al-Minhaj, by Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Ramli, 8:78.

[168] An agreed-upon hadith.

[169] Banu Kilab and Banu Amir are one and same tribe (t.n).

[170] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:99.

[171] An agreed-upon hadith.

[172] See Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, Sirat Ibn Hisham, Tarikh al-Tabari, and Ibn Kathir's commentary on Surat al-Hashr (Qur'an, Surah 59).

[173] 'Uyun al-Athar, 2:51.

[174] Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, Al-Umm, 7:324. See also my book, Dawabit al-Maslahah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah, pp. 170-171.

[175] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Sahih Muslim, 12:50.

[176] Al-Bukhari (5:53) narrates this account in his section entitled, "The Expedition of the Rags," while Muslim (3:214) includes it under the heading, "The Prayer of Fear." Muslim also narrates after this on the authority of Jabir that when the call to prayer was sounded, he (pbuh) performed two cycles of prayer with the first group; then, after they had moved back to their positions facing the enemy, he (pbuh) performed two more cycles of prayer with the other group. Based on this account, then, the Messenger of God (pbuh) performed four cycles of prayer for the other men's two. As I see it, these two accounts may be reconciled by concluding that the Prophet (pbuh) performed the prayer of fear with his Companions on more than one occasion, doing so differently on each occasion. The hadith related by Muslim indicates that a person on a journey may perform two cycles of prayer in place of the usual four; this is the position which, unlike Abu Hanifah, is held by al-Shafi'i, Malik, and Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

[177] Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:52-54.

[178] Ibn Ishaq adds that the two men's names were 'Ammar Ibn Yasir and 'Abbad Ibn Bishr.

[179] This account is narrated by Ahmad, al-Tabari, and Abu Dawud on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, on the authority of Sadaqah Ibn Yasar, on the authority of 'Aqil Ibn Jabir, on the authority of Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah.

[180] The name of a place on the outskirts of Medina.

[181] This particular wording of the story is based on Ibn Ishaq's narrative; it is also found in Ibn Hisham's Sirah, and similar versions are found in Muslim and al-Bukhari.

[182] See Fath al-Bari, 7:294, 'Uyun al-Athar, 2:53, and Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:111.

[183] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Sahih Muslim, 12:197-198.

[184] "One cycle of prayer" (Arabic, rak'ah) refers to a recitation of the Fatihah, the first chapter of the Qur'an followed by some other passage from the Qur'an; one bending of the torso from an upright position; then two prostrations (t.n).

[185] For further details on this matter, see Fath al-Bari, 7:304, Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:112, and 'Uyun al-Athar, 2:93.

[186] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:106, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:290.

[187] Ibn Ishaq narrates this hadith in an incompletely transmitted form (i.e., resting on a chain of transmission which goes back no further than the second generation after the Prophet (pbuh)); Ibn Sa'd gives an abbreviated version of the same hadith; al-Bayhaqi narrates it on the authority of Jabir; Ahmad and Ibn Jarir narrate it on the authority of Zayd Ibn Arqam; and Ibn Abi Hatim relies for his narrative on the authority of 'Amr Ibn Thabit al-Ansari, with all accounts containing similar details and being in essential agreement with each other. All these accounts, with the exception of Ibn Ishaq's narrative, are based on chains of transmission which go back to the Prophet (pbuh) himself. See Ibn Kathir's commentary, 4:370, Tarikh Ibn Jarir, 2:606, Al-Fath al-Rabbani, 18:306 and 21:70, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:291.

[188] The verse being referred to reads in part: "And (as for the Prophet's wives,) whenever you ask them for anything that you need, ask them from behind a screen: this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs. . . " (The Confederates 33: 53). Asad notes that the word hijab, translated 'screen' here, "denotes anything that intervenes between two things, or conceals, shelters or protects the one from the other; it may be rendered, according to the context, as 'barrier,' 'obstacle,' 'partition,' 'screen,' 'curtain,' 'veil,' etc., in both the concrete and abstract connotations of these words" (The Message of the Qur'an, Note 69 on "The Confederates") (t.n).

[189] The Cow 2: 156. In other words, since the utterance of this phrase is enjoined upon believers when some calamity befalls them, it appears that Safwan Ibn al-Mu'attal expects disaster to strike due to his having come upon one of the Prophet's wives in such a potentially compromising situation (t.n).

[190] This hadith is narrated by Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ibn Ishaq, and others.

[191] The Arabic word wa'd refers, literally, to the practice of burying an infant alive, which in the pre-Islamic era was widely resorted to when a female child was born and there was the fear of not being able to sustain the additional financial burdens associated with a female's care and upbringing (t.n).

[192] That is, sayings or acts related or performed by one of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), but not by the Prophet himself (pbuh) (t.n).

[193] See Ibn Hazm al-Zahiri, Al-Muhalla, 10:87.

[194] See Fath al-Bari, 9:245.

[195] The term "embryo" refers to the fetus during the first two months following conception (t.n).

[196] See Tarh al-Tathrib fi Sharh al-Taqrib and its explanation by al-Hafié al-'Iraqi, 8:62

[197] Al-Naba' al-'Aëim ("The Momentous Tidings"), by Dr. Muhammad 'Abdullah Darraz, p. 17.

[198] The Qur'anic passage which lays this out is 24:4, "And as for those who accuse chaste women (of adultery) and do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their testimony forever. They indeed are truly depraved!" (t.n)

[199] See Fath al-Bari, 7:275, and al-Fath al-Rabbani arranged by Imam Ahmad, 21:76.

[200] This is an abbreviated version of the accounts presented in Sirat Ibn Hisham and Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Al-Bukhari, 5:46; Muslim (6:187) narrates a similar hadith on the authority of al-Bara'.

[203] Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:46; see also Fath al-Bari, 7:279-280.

[204] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd and Sirat Ibn Hisham.

[205] Ibid.

[206] See Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:223 and Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:573.

[207] Muslim, 5:177. Al-Bukhari's account gives the impression that the person who went out on this mission was not Hudhayfah, but al-Zubayr. However, al-Zubayr's going out is connected with another incident, in which he was sent forth by the Prophet (pbuh) to learn what he could about Banu Qurayéah. As for the person sent out during the Battle of the Trench, most scholars of the Prophetic biography hold that it was Hudhayfah. See Ibn Sayyid al-Nas's 'Uyun al-Athar, and Ibn Hajar's Fath al-Bari.

[208] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:231.

[209] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[210] This is an agreed-upon hadith, the wording being that of al-Bukhari's account.

[211] Salman's second name, al-Farisi, means literally, "the Persian," and he is said to have come originally from the Mageans of Esfahan (t.n).

[212] See Fath al-Bari, 2:47, and Nayl al-Awtar, 2:27.

[213] This is an agreed-upon hadith, the wording being that of al-Bukhari's account.

[214] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[215] According to Ibn Hisham's account, the siege lasted for twenty-five days, whereas Ibn Sa'd states in his Tabaqat that it lasted only fifteen days.

[216] According to the commentators on this hadith, the mosque referred to is not the Messenger of God's mosque in Medina but rather, a place near where Banu Qurayéah resided which had been designated as a place for prayer.

[217] An agreed-upon hadith.

[218] An agreed-upon hadith, the phrasing being that given by al-Bukhari.

[219] Al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 12:92.

[220] Ibid., 12:93.

[221] This is the phrasing included by al-Bukhari, with the other accounts differing from it only by way of minor word variations and additions.

[222] Fath al-Bari, 7:292.

[223] "Good" here means a chain of narrators who do not approach in moral excellency to the level of those required for the hadith to be classified as "sound" (sahih) (t.n).

[224] Entering into the state of ritual consecration for either the major pilgrimage (hajj) or the minor pilgrimage ('umrah) involves the following: One first expresses one's intention to enter into this state, both in one's heart and in audible speech. Then one recites the talbiyah, which consists of the words, "Here am I, O God, here am I! Here am I. Thou hast no partners. Here am I. To thee belong praise, blessing, and authority. Thou hast no partners. Here am I." One puts on the special pilgrim's garb, which consists of an izar, which is worn below one's waist, and a rida', which is worn around the upper torso. There are specific regulations governing the pilgrim's behavior which differ from those applying to Muslims not in this state (t.n).

[225] Qaswa', which refers literally to a she-camel with a nicked ear, was the name of the Prophet's mount.

[226] This is an allusion to the time when, in the year 570 A.D., Abrahah, the Christian viceroy of Yemen (which was ruled at that time by the Abyssinians) marched toward Mecca with the intention of destroying the Ka'bah. However, God caused Abrahah's elephant to turn around and head back where it had come from (t.n.; see Asad's introduction to Chapter 105 of the Qur'an, "The Elephant").

[227] This is the account narrated by al-Bukhari in his section entitled, "Conditions." It is also narrated by Ibn Ishaq and others. The following hadith is also included by al-Bukhari in his section entitled "Battles and Expeditions," where he tells us: "He (pbuh) sat at the well and called for a container to be brought to him. He rinsed his mouth and called upon God, then poured the water back into the well. He (pbuh) then told the people to let the well rest for an hour. So they waited for an hour, then drank from it once more. Al-Hafié Ibn Hajar writes in Fath al-Bari, "The two accounts may be reconciled by saying that both events occurred together. As for the hadith according to which he (pbuh) placed his hand

in a small waterskin, then caused the water to gush forth from between his fingers, this is a separate incident, unrelated to the present one. Moreover, all the related accounts are sound and well-attested."

[228] What this means is that these men have brought with them everything they might possibly need by way of sustenance so that they will not be obliged to return home until they have prevented the Muslims from entering Mecca.

[229] Al-Lat was one of the female goddesses worshipped at the Ka'bah (t.n).

[230] The favor 'Urwah is referring to here is that once, when he had a bloodwit to pay, Abu Bakr helped him to make good on his commitment.

[231] What 'Urwah means by this is that prior to becoming a Muslim, al-Mughirah Ibn Shu'bah had slain thirteen men for whom 'Urwah had paid the blood money.

[232] The words in parentheses are details provided by Muslim, whereas the main text of the hadith is taken from al-Bukhari's account.

[233] An agreed-upon hadith.

[234] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[235] This account is a continuation of the hadith of al-Bukhari which was last mentioned.

[236] See al-Isabah, 4:24.

[237] See Section Three, my description of "the Prophet's stay in the home of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari".

[238] I have been told by a highly respected friend of mine that a certain man, after reading the above quote from 'Urwah in an earlier edition of this book, made photocopies of the relevant pages and began distributing them among people, using them as a means of detracting from the Messenger of God (pbuh)! In response, let me say that if this man's intentions for doing what he did had been pure, he would most certainly deserve to be thanked and rewarded for having drawn attention to a fact which many people today are unaware of, namely, the intense degree to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) was venerated and loved by his Companions! Untold events associated with the conquest of Mecca would remain inexplicable riddles if they were not interpreted and explained for us by this passionate love. A love which grips the heart and makes it way deep into the soul, it springs from the unflagging certainty that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of God and the manifestation of God's mercy to all people. However, in doing what he did, this person's intention was to misrepresent the place which the Messenger of God (pbuh) held in the hearts of his followers, presenting him as a rude boor who was bent on exploiting his companions, who took pleasure in being the object of fawning adulation, and who made it a habit to reveal to others that which it would have been more fitting to keep concealed, thereby encouraging them to find solace in anything and everything associated with his person. Yet in seeking to accomplish an end such as this, he has missed the mark entirely! Many others have sought to achieve a similar purpose, racking their brains and combing the annals of history in search of evidence that would enable them to present this sort of image of Muhammad, the Messenger of God (pbuh). However, their efforts have been in vain, while reason, history, and the unfettered intellect have all continued to affirm the words with which God himself described him (pbuh), saying, "And verily, you are on an exalted standard of character" (Qur'an 68:4).

Read any book you wish dealing with the qualities of this great Messenger, and you will find yourself face to face with the most flawless exemplar of noble, pristine humanity, a refined sense of the standards of conduct and social converse, a keen sensitivity to others and their needs, a clean, neat, elegant appearance, and the utmost humility in his dealings with all of his companions regardless of their social rank or standing. He (pbuh) never received those who came to him in anything but the cleanest, most comely attire, and he took the greatest of care to ensure that whenever he presented himself to others, he was pleasing to the eye and to the nose as well. It is a well-attested fact that he spent most of his money on perfume. He (pbuh) did not eat onions, garlic, or any food whose odor might cause offense. As we noted earlier in the account of his stay in the home of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari when he first emigrated to Medina, his plate of food once came back untouched. Alarmed, Abu Ayyub rushed to the Messenger of God (pbuh) and asked him why he had not eaten, to which he (pbuh) replied, "I detected the aroma of that plant (that is, garlic), and I am one who receives many visitors with whom I converse a great deal. But as for you, eat as much as you wish." And when he had to answer the call of nature, he distanced himself as far as he could from others.

He (pbuh) combed his hair and took good care of his teeth, and once, perhaps having noted that some of his visitors had yellowed teeth, he chided them gently with a bit of general advice, saying, "Why is it that you come to me with your teeth yellowed instead of cleaning and polishing them?"

This, then, is Muhammad (pbuh), whose personal qualities reveal a man of high morals, gentle sensitivity, transparency, and noble sentiments. In this portrait of ideal humanity, can you see any room for the acceptance of manipulation, falsification or distortion? Moreover, 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud's statement about the love which the Prophet's Companions had for him contains nothing which would detract from his stature (pbuh), portray him as being ill-mannered or vulgar in his conduct or exploitative in his dealings with others, or give us reason to believe that it was he who urged his Companions to behave as they did.

Hence, if this man wishes to express distaste for those who were driven by love to do as they did, he must first identify what it is that has caused him to feel so critical toward them lest he unjustly accuse the innocent; for the fact is that this man's true opponent is not those whom he loathes and condemns, but love itself! It was love which impelled the Prophet's Companions to do the things of which 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud spoke, not to mention other things even more daring. It was love which caused iron to soften in their hands, as it were; which brought the inaccessible near; which made the impossible possible; and which rendered the ugly beautiful and the bitter sweet. This is love's work, and this is its invincible power.

Moreover, what is truly astounding is that this man and others of his ilk are well aware of how people are affected by rash, foolhardy love – that is, the type of love which makes its way into one's heart without the mind's consent, as it were, or against one's better judgment. It sinks people in the filth of degradation and drives them to commit acts of perversion which are too repulsive even to mention. Even so, this man and

like-minded people find nothing shocking or repugnant in such conduct. On the contrary, numerous writers and poets have pronounced their blessing on this very type of perversion, imagining it to be a splendid embodiment of mature romantic passion. However, when they encounter the sublime love which flows from both the heart and the mind together and the effects which it has upon the lives and behavior of those who experience it, they are bewildered and amazed and, feigning distaste and disapproval, bemoan the lost of tact and refined taste!

Let it be known to this man and like-minded people that everything in the world is subject to a higher law -- everything, that is, except love; for love is subject to nothing but its own law. Woe betide those whose love is a rebellion of the emotions against reason; but blessed are those whose heartfelt emotions are in harmony with their well-founded convictions. The Companions of the Messenger of God (pbuh) considered it an honor and a source of pride that the love for the Prophet (pbuh) which had claimed their hearts was a reflection of their reasoned faith in the genuineness of his prophethood and in the exalted standing which he enjoyed in the presence of the Lord of the Worlds. Knowing this, they said, in effect, "Let love have its way with us! If it leads us to seek blessing through his sweat, his spittle, the hair that falls from his head, and the water with which he has performed his ablutions, then so be it." For this is the language of love – a language which is smelted and shaped within love's own crucible apart from any external influences. And I am certain that there are people today who, were they to see Muhammad (pbuh) walking on earth with their own eyes, would fall in passionate love with him, prostrating themselves on the ground and licking the dust beneath his feet! This logic of love is opposed by none but those who live by the logic of hatred and bitterness. However, an opposition of this sort is endorsed by neither logic nor reason, for it goes without saying that no debate will get anywhere unless it is based on a minimum number of truths which are acknowledged by both sides.

When Qays Ibn al-Mulawwah of the tribe of Banu Amir heard that people condemned him for his attachment to Laylâ -- who was said to be dark-skinned and uncomely – he summed up love's timeless wisdom, saying, "If they looked at her through my eyes, they would know that they are mistaken!"

[239] The hadith in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) restores sight to the blind man is a sound Tradition related by al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, al-Bayhaqi, and others on the authority of 'Uthman Ibn Hanif, may God be pleased with him, who tells us that a blind man came to the Prophet (pbuh) while other men were seated around him (pbuh). The man complained to the Prophet (pbuh) of the loss of his sight, and the latter instructed him to have patience. The man then said, "I have no one to guide me, and losing my sight has been very trying for me." The Prophet (pbuh) then told the man, "Go perform your ablutions, then perform two cycles of prayer and say, 'O God, I come before You through Your Prophet, Muhammad, the prophet of mercy. O Muhammad, through you I have come before my Lord in my neediness. O God, allow him to be my intercessor before You.'" (Some accounts also include the words, "Hence, if you have some need, do the same.") 'Uthman Ibn Hanif said, "I swear to God, before our session had broken up, the man came back in to where we were sitting, and his sight had been restored."

[240] See Section Two, my description of "God's honoring His Apostle (pbuh) by restoring the pasturelands of Halimah of Banu Sa'd to lush greenness after it had been arid and desolate."

[241] See Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:114.

[242] For further details on this truce, see Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:260, Al-Mughni by by Ibn Qudamah,, 9:290, Al-Hidayah, 2:103, and Bidayat al-Mujtahid, 1:374.

[243] That is, over and above the acts of worship which are required of every Muslim, including the performance of the major pilgrimage once in his or her lifetime (t.n).

[244] An agreed-upon hadith.

[245] This hadith is agreed upon beginning with the words, "Tomorrow I shall pass my standard to a man at whose hands ...."

[246] An agreed-upon hadith.

[247] This version of the story is given by Ibn Ibn Ishaq; as for the story itself, it is agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

[248] An agreed-upon hadith.

[249] The account concerning Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib's coming and his being given a share of the spoils from Khaybar is narrated by al-Bukhari and others. However, al-Bukhari's account contains no details about how he was received by the Messenger of God (pbuh).

[250] This hadith is narrated by al-Bukhari. See also Fath al-Bari 7:347.

[251] Abu Hanifah held that horsemen were to receive only two shares each – one for the horseman and the other for his steed. However, this view is refuted by the manner in which the Messenger of God (pbuh) divided the spoils at Khaybar.

[252] See Fath al-Bari, 7:340 and 349.

[253] This is a reference to Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani and Abu Yusuf al-Qadi, who were companions and esteemed disciples of Abu Hanifah (t.n).

[254] See I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin, 2:292, commercial edition, on the subject of "the artifice of seeking a wife-initiated separation as a means of avoiding an official divorce," where Ibn al-Qayyim says, "This artifice is legally invalid." See also Ibid., 4:110, where he justifies this same artifice with no fewer than ten types of evidence which he considers to be legitimate. If one reads the context of such comments by Ibn al-Qayyim, one finds even more astonishing inconsistencies. For further details on what are referred to as "legal artifices" and the effect of al-maqasid on contractual agreements and legal rulings, see by book, Dawabit al-Maslahah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah, pp. 293-324.

[255] This is an abridged version of the account found in Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 2:23.

[256] The portion of the message in quotation marks is from Qur'an 3:64 (t.n). This hadith is agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

[257] The details related here concerning the letter sent by the Messenger of God (pbuh) to Khosrau belong to Ibn Sa'd's narrative as it appears in his Al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá; the same report, in a more abbreviated form, is also included by al-Bukhari. Al-Bukhari's account mentions, in addition, that when the Messenger of God (pbuh) learned that his letter had been torn to pieces, he called down a curse upon those who had done this, asking that they, too, be torn to pieces. In his comments on al-Ghazali's book, Fiqh al-Sirah ("The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography"), Shaykh Nasir attributes to Ibn Sa'd an addition which I did not find in Al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, namely, that "when the Prophet (pbuh) noticed that the two men who had been sent to him by Badhan had twisted moustaches and clean-shaven cheeks, he looked away from them and said, 'Woe to you! Who gave you orders to do this to yourselves?' 'Our lord,' they replied, referring to Khosrau." In searching for this addition, I found it not in Al-Tabaqat, but rather, in Ibn Jarir's narrative.

[258] This account is narrated by al-Waqidi on the authority of 'Amr Ibn al-Hakam. According to Ibn Hajar, it is also mentioned by Ibn Shahin based on the chain of narrators associated with Muhammad Ibn Yazid.

[259] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:167.

[260] Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:370. The same content is affirmed by al-Bukhari and Muslim, who provide accounts with similar wording.

[261] See 'Uyun al-Athar, 2:148.

[262] Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5:85.

[263] Muslim, 5:65.

[264] This practice is also considered to be part of the Prophetic Sunnah when hastening back and forth between Safa and Marwah.

[265] Referred to in Arabic as ramal, or harwalah, the gait recommended during the first three circuits around the Ka'bah involves walking at a rapid pace with small, close steps (t.n).

[266] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 2:218.

[267] Narrated by Muslim.

[268] Muslim, 5:60, with al-Bukhari narrating a similar account.

[269] Narrated by al-Bukhari, Ahmad, and Ibn Sa'd in his Tabaqat; however, al-Bukhari's account does not include the phrase, "If 'Abdullah is killed as well, then let the Muslims choose a commander from amongst themselves."

[270] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[271] See Fath al-Bari, 7:361-2.

[272] See Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:175, and Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:375.

[273] See Fath al-Bari, 7:361.

[274] This event is narrated by Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Ishaq, with this particular text being that of Ibn Sa'd. Ibn Hajar tells us that this same event is narrated by al-Bazzar, al-Tabarani, Musá Ibn 'Uqbah, and others. (Ibn Hisham mentions that as the Prophet (pbuh) was speaking, a cloud appeared to him in the sky, and it was this which inspired his prediction concerning the rain. See Ibn Hisham 4:395 – t.n)

[275] This event is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd with similar wording.

[276] This is an agreed-upon hadith, with the wording being that of al-Bukhari's account.

[277] This text is taken from al-Bukhari's account which, as the reader can see, makes no mention of the conversion of Abu Sufyan's two companions. According to scholars of the Prophetic biography, most notably Musá Ibn 'Uqbah, both Budayl and Hakim embraced Islam as soon as they came in to see the Messenger of God (pbuh), whereas Abu Sufyan did not take this step until the following morning; this would explain why al-Bukhari makes specific mention of Abu Sufyan's conversion and says nothing about the conversions of his two comrades.

[278] These events are narrated in similarly worded accounts by Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, and al-Bukhari.

[279] Ibn Ishaq.

[280] Narrated by al-Bukhari, Ibn Ishaq, and others.

[281] This event is narrated by Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Ishaq. Ibn Hajar comments, "The names of these six men and these four women were gleaned from miscellaneous accounts."

[282] Kada' is the name of a mountain trail which was located next to Mecca's cemeteries.

[283] These events are narrated by Ibn Sa'd in al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, and a similar account is narrated by Ibn iajar on the authority of Musá Ibn 'Uqbah; al-Bukhari narrates an abbreviated version of the same. According to Ibn Hisham's account, the number of polytheists who were killed was 13 or 14. See Fath al-Bari, 8:8-9.

[284] An agreed-upon hadith.

[285] This is a reference to the headless, featherless arrows which were once used in casting lots and divination (t.n).

[286] This is al-Bukhari's account of the incident; according to Muslim's account, however, the Prophet (pbuh) did pray inside the Ka'bah. We shall discuss this point further below, God willing.

[287] A similar account is also narrated by Ibn Sa'd in al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá.

[288] The explanatory words in brackets are included in Ibn Hisham's account (Ibn Hisham 4:416) (t.n).

[289] This account is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Jarir.

[290] That is, 60:12 (t.n).

[291] See al-Bukhari, 8:135; Muslim (6:29) relates a similar statement by A'ishah.

[292] An agreed-upon hadith.

[293] This story is mentioned by Ibn Hisham in his Sirah, and by Ibn al-Qayyim in his Zad al-Ma'a d.

[294] In comment upon this phrase, Asad quotes from al-Tabari, who explained it thus, "Before making war on them, inform them that because of the clear evidence of their treachery, thou hast renounced the treaty which existed between thee and them, so that both thou and they should know that thou art at war with them."

[295] Al-Mudawwanah, attributed to Imam Malik, contains questions posed to Malik on matters of jurisprudence and his answers to them. It is narrated by 'Abd al-Salam Ibn Sa'id al-Tanukhi, known as Sahnun.

[296] Al-Mudawwanah, 16:93.

[297] The word "Successors," capitalized as in this context, refers to those who conversed with the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) (t.n).

[298] Asad provides the following insightful note on his translation of this verse, saying, "The term najas (impure) occurs in the Qur'an only in this one instance, and carries an exclusively spiritual meaning (see Manar X, 322ff). To this day, the Bedouin of Central and Eastern Arabia – who, contrary to the modern town-dwellers, have preserved the purity of the Arabic idiom to a high degree – describe a person who is immoral, faithless, or wicked as najas. 'The Inviolable House of Worship' is, of course, the Ka'bah and, by implication, the whole of the territory of Mecca" (t.n).

[299] Ikhtilaf al-Hadith, by Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, deals with hadith which appear to be in conflict with one another, showing ways in which they may be reconciled, and explaining the meanings of obscure or problematic hadith (t.n).

[300] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 9:124-125, and al-Mawardi's al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah wa-al-Wilayat al-Diniyah, 166.

[301] See I'lam al-Sajid fi Ahkam al-Masajid by al-Zarkashi, 162, and Tarh al-Tathrib, 5:86.

[302] See I'lam al-Sajid by al-Zarkashi, 157.

[303] See my Dawabit al-Maslahah fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah, 200.

[304] See Fath al-Bari, 3:304, and al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 9:82.

[305] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, and Tarh al-Tathrib, 5:175.

[306] What al-Nawawi is referring to here is a hadith narrated by Muslim on the authority of A'ishah, who said, "The Messenger of God (pbuh) came in to see me one day, and I was seated behind a thin curtain decorated with pictures. When he (pbuh) saw the curtain, he got red in the face, then took it and ripped it apart, saying, 'Those who imitate the creation of God will suffer one of the severest of all punishments on the Day of Resurrection!'"

[307] Al-Nawawi's commentary on Sahih Muslim, 14:81.

[308] See Al-Ahkam al-Sulttaniyah, 164, and Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:174.

[309] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 4:200.

[310] Ibid., 4:200, and Sirat Ibn Hisham.

[311] This account is narrated by Ibn Ishaq with a sound chain of transmission; the same account is narrated on Ibn Ishaq's authority by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Sayyid al-Nas.

[312] An acacia tree was the site of the pledge of allegiance which was made at al-Ridwan during the same year as the Truce of al-Hudaybiyah.

[313] This account is narrated by Muslim, and a similar, briefer account is narrated by al-Bukhari as well; detailed versions of the account are included by all books on the Prophetic biography.

[314] An agreed-upon hadith.

[315] This account is narrated by Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah; Muslim and al-Bukhari also include an account which conveys the same sense.

[316] An agreed-upon hadith.

[317] This hadith is narrated by Ibn Sa'd in al-Tabaqat, and is mentioned also by al-Tirmidhi in his hadith collection. Ibn Sa'd narrates it on the authority of 'Asim al-Kilabi, on the authority of Ashhab, on the authority of al-Hasan.

[318] In other words, such individuals would agree to return the captives they had been given on the condition that they be compensated for this later, whenever further spoils became available for distribution.

[319] This account is narrated by al-Bukhari; a more detailed account of the same event is narrated by al-Tabari, al-Bayhaqi and Ibn Sayyid al-Nas with a chain of narrators going back to Ibn Ishaq.

[320] An agreed-upon hadith.

[321] The reference here is to the Apostle's pool, from which he (pbuh) will give his people to drink on the Day of Resurrection (t.n).

[322] Similar versions of this account are narrated by Muslim, al-Bukhari, Ibn Ishaq, and Ibn Sa'd.

[323] Tihamah is a coastal plain along the southwestern and southern shores of the Arabian Peninsula (t.n).

[324] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[325] This addition is included by Abu Dawud and al- Nasa'i on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr.

[326] An agreed-upon hadith.

[327] See Zad al-Ma'ad, 2:190, and Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:221.

[328] Ibn Kathir's commentary on the Holy Qur'an, 2:45.

[329] See Fath al-Bari, 6:51.

[330] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:219.

[331] Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah, 4; and Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:223.

[332] See Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah, 139; and Al-Ahkam fi Tamyiz al-Fatwá 'an al-Ahkam by al-Qarafi, 38.

[333] See Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:218, and Fath al-Bari, 8:87.

[334] An agreed-upon hadith.

[335] Al-Jadd Ibn Qays.

[336] This incident is related by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Mardawayh with a chain of transmission which includes al-Dahhak, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; it is also related by 'Abd al-Razzaq on the authority of Mu'ammar, on the authority of Qatadah. See Al-Isabah, 1:230.

[337] This event is narrated by al-Tabarani; it is also narrated by al-Tirmidhi, al-Hakim, and Imam Ahmad based on the hadith of 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khabbab.

[338] This saying is mentioned by al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan and by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad based on the hadith of 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Samurah.

[339] This hadith is narrated by al-Tirmidhi, al-Hakim, and Abu Dawud. The chain of narrators includes Hisham Ibn Sa'd, who narrates on the authority of Zayd Ibn Aslam; however, Hisham is considered by Imam Ahmad and al-Kasa'i to be of questionable reliability, while al-Hafié Ibn HHajar places him in the fifth rank as a narrator, describing him as "truthful, but subject to error." However, al-Dhahabi quotes Abu Dawud as saying that when quoting from Zayd Ibn Aslam, as he does in this hadith, Hisham is entirely reliable. Moreover, al-Dhahabi quotes al-Hakim as saying that Muslim cites Hisham's hadiths as textual evidence in favor of views which he supports.

[340] This figure is based on the accounts narrated by Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ishaq, and others.

[341] Ibn Ishaq.

[342] That is, a camel used for carrying water, either for irrigation or travel purposes (t.n).

[343] This is mentioned by Ibn Sa'd in al-Tabaqat al-Kubrá, 3:220.

[344] This hadith is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad, and it is cited by Ibn Kathir in his history. In addition, it is narrated by Muslim on the authority of Abu Kurayb, on the authority of Abu Mu'awiyah, on the authority of al-A'mash.

[345] The jizyah is the head tax imposed on free non-Muslims under Muslim rule (t.n).

[346] The tribe of Thamud, to whom the prophet Salih was sent as a warner, persisted in their rejection of God and His messengers, and they were wiped out of existence (see Qur'an 7:65-79; 11:61-68; and 14:9-18) (t.n).

[347] An agreed-upon hadith.

[348] An agreed-upon hadith.

[349] An agreed-upon hadith, narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari.

[350] This is a reference to the passage quoted below, namely, Qur'an 9:117-119 (t.n).

[351] This is an abridged version of the accounts narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

[352] An uqiyah is a unit of weight that equals to 200 grams (t.n).

[353] Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam, 2:186.

[354] Some of my readers may be surprised by the fact that I agree with the Wahhabite view on this particular matter, even though I have taken them to task for a number of other positions which they hold. Such surprise, where it exists, is no doubt due to a mistaken conception of how a Muslim ought to think and conduct himself. It is not Islamic in any way for an academic search dictated by the mind to be transformed into a bigoted prejudice that has taken over one's soul. Nor is it consistent with the spirit or teachings of Islam for one to advocate a particular opinion or school of Islamic law on the pretext that in so doing, he is championing Islam itself, especially when such a person knows in his heart of hearts that he is simply defending the point of view because it has come to form a part of his personality and his standing among others.

When engaging in academic research, the Muslim must have in view nothing but the Book of God and the Prophetic Sunnah, and he must not allow any other power or authority to influence his emotions or thoughts. Moreover, if such a Muslim is committed to the truth, he must conduct himself in such a way that no other Muslim is caused distress by his words or angered by his judgments. If, in my discussion of issues raised in this book, I disagree in my conclusions with other people, this is not -- and God is my witness -- out of a desire to differ with others, but rather, simply out of a desire to be faithful to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Hence, I may err in my judgments and conclusions, but even if I do, my aim remains the same.

Similarly, if in my discussion of the question at hand I have reached a conclusion which agrees with that of some Muslims and differs with that of many others, including the Sufis among them, this is not because of any wish on my part to differ with them or because I take enjoyment in criticizing them; rather, it is simply because I sincerely desire not to stray from the Book of God or the Sunnah of His Messenger (pbuh). At

the same time, I wish to affirm my appreciation for many of these esteemed individuals and my certainty of their integrity and the purity of their intentions, my excuse for differing with them being that this appreciation and esteem do not justify being unfaithful to the texts before me or interpreting them metaphorically such that their original intent is distorted.

If the Muslims sought out the truth they are meant to follow based on this same criterion, we would not find the various Islamic sects and groups treating each other with harshness and even enmity even if their views and interpretations happened to differ. However, prejudice and extremism have led the Muslims to the state in which they now find themselves. The Sufis call their opponents to account for what they see as fanaticism and excess, yet they do not call themselves to account for similar attitudes, and for those practices which have no basis in Islam! Is this, then, the truth which we should be living? Excess on one side only breeds excess on the other; hence, whoever wishes to come to the defense of God's religion and the guidance brought by His Messenger (pbuh) must put an end to all extremism, harmful innovation, and heresy. This is the best possible remedy for the counter-extremism which one is likely to meet with among others.

[355] See Ibn ìajar's Kaff al-Ra'a', 48 on the margin of his book, Al-Zawajir.

[356] Zad al-Ma'ad, 3:20.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Musaylimah Ibn Thamamah Ibn Kabir Ibn Habib al-Hanafi al-Wa'ili, known to Muslim posterity as "Musaylimah the Liar," was born and raised in al-Yamamah, of Najd. Toward the end of the year 10 A.H., Musaylimah claimed to be a second "Messenger of God," and in a letter sent to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), he proposed that he (Musaylimah) and Quraysh share sovereignty over the Arabian Peninsula. In his reply, Muhammad (pbuh) wrote, "From Muhammad the Messenger of God, to Musaylimah the Liar. Peace be upon those who follow true guidance. 'Verily, the earth is God's. He gives it as a heritage to whom He wills of His servants; and the (best) outcome is for the righteous!' (Qur'an 7:128)." Nevertheless, Musaylimah continued composing rhymed prose in which he sought to imitate the Qur'an. In 12 A.H., after Abu Bakr became Caliph, he sent out a powerful army under the command of Khalid Ibn al-Walid against Banu Hanifah, and Musaylimah died in the ensuing battle (t.n).

[359] Ibid., 3:22.

[360] See Al-Mabsut by al-Sarkhasi, 12:93; Zad al-Ma'ad by Ibn al-Qayyim, 3:23; and my Dawabit al-Maslahah, 244 and 284.

[361] See Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, 'Uyun al-Athar, 2:231.

[362] For a contrasting view of the meaning of jihad in the Qur'an and Sunnah, see Asad's explanatory notes on Qur'an 9:5, especially Notes 7 and 9 (t.n).

[363] Ibn Kathir's commentary on the Qur'an, 2:387-388; a similar version of the same account is found in Sirat Ibn Hisham, 2:322.

[364] For further details on events related to these verses, see Asad, Notes 142 and 143 on Chapter 9 of the Qur'an, "Repentance" (t.n).

[365] See Zad al-Ma'ad, 3:17.

[366] Ibn Hisham, 2:324.

[367] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 2:78.

[368] See Zad al-Ma'ad, 3:26-28. (See also Qur'an 5:90-91 and Asad's accompanying notes – t.n)

[369] Ibn Hisham, 2:327.

[370] Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 3:78.

[371] Al-Zarkashi, I'lam al-Sajid, 319-321, abridged.

[372] In an explanatory note on this phrase, Asad writes, "Lit., 'his place of security' (ma'manahu) – i.e., 'let him rejoin his homeland' (Razi), which implies that he is free to accept or not to accept the message of the Qur'an: a further re-affirmation of the Qur'anic injunction that 'there shall be no coercion in matters of faith' (2: 256)" (t.n).

[373] See my discussion of visual representation and photography in Section Six under "The Conquest of Mecca".

[374] This account is narrated in great detail by al-Bayhaqi and al-Hakim in Dala'il al-Nubuwah. The account of the peace treaty which included an agreement to pay the head tax is also narrated by Abu Dawud in his section on "Land Taxes" under the heading, "The Collection of the Head Tax." See also the story of the Christian delegation from Najran in Ibn Kathir's commentary, 1:368-369.

[375] This sect is said to have shared characteristics common to Christians and Sabians, the latter of whom "seem to have been a monotheistic religious group intermediate between Judaism and Christianity. Their name (probably derived from the Aramaic tsebha', 'he immersed himself in water') would indicate that they were followers of John the Baptist..." (Asad, Note 49 on "The Cow", Chapter 2 of the Qur'an) (t.n).

[376] The details needed to translate the final lines of this hadith were taken from Sirat Ibn Hisham, 4:581 (t.n).

[377] Similar versions of this account are narrated by Ibn Ishaq, Imam Ahmad, and al-Baghawi in his lexicon. See al-Hafié Ibn Hajar, Al-Isabah, 2:461, and Tartib Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 21:108.

[378] See Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd and Sirat Ibn Hisham; according to al-Bukhari, the Prophet (pbuh) sent both Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib to Yemen (see Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:110).

[379] An agreed-upon hadith.

[380] An agreed-upon hadith.

[381] Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 21:214.

[382] See Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4:211, and al-Mawardi, al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah.

[383] There is disagreement among narrators regarding the day of the week on which the Prophet (pbuh) set out. According to Ibn Hazm, it was on a Thursday, whereas according to others, it was a Friday. However, the correct view, as we read in Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hajar's Al-Fath, is that he (pbuh) departed on a Saturday. Thursday was the first day of Dhu al-Hijjah, which means that the previous month, namely, Dhu al-Qa'dah, consisted of 29 days. As for various narrators' statement that his departure took place five days prior to the end of Dhu al-Qa'dah, it is based on the supposition that the month was 30 days long.

[384] Narrated by al-Tabarani and Ibn Sa'd.

[385] See the hadith narrated by Jabir concerning the pilgrimage performed by the Messenger of God (pbuh) in Sahih Muslim, 4:37.

[386] Qur'an 9:37. As Asad points out in an explanatory note on this passage, the word rendered "intercalation" may also mean "postponement." He explains this practice by saying, "In their endeavor to obviate certain disadvantages for their trade caused by the seasonal rotation of the lunar months, the pagan Arabs used to intercalate a thirteenth month in the third, sixth and eighth year of every eight-year period with a view to making the lunar calendar more or less stationary, and thus roughly corresponding to the solar year. An acceptance of this unwarranted intercalation by the Muslims would have tied the Mecca pilgrimage as well as the fast of Ramadan to fixed seasons, and would thus have made, permanently, the performance of these religious duties either too exacting or too easy; and in either case the believers would have been offending against the spiritual purpose underlying these duties..." (see Asad's Note 54 on Qur'an 9, "Repentance" – t.n).

[387] These last two paragraphs form part of the version which appears in Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd.

[388] I have taken the text of this address from Sahih Muslim, with an addition taken from al-Bukhari, namely, the passage beginning, "You shall all meet your Lord," and ending, "those who heard them with their own ears." I have included other minor additions based on the versions handed down by Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, and others.

[389] Throwing pebbles at the three stone pillars at Miná, which stand as a symbol of evil, is one of the pilgrimage rites (t.n).

[390] These details are taken from Jabir's hadith, narrated by Muslim and others, concerning the Prophet's performance of the pilgrimage.

[391] Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, 8:74.

[392] See Al-Qurtubi, Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an, 8:137-138.

[393] At the time of this expedition, Usamah was between 18 and 20 years of age.

[394] It was at this time that the Prophet (pbuh) was beginning to suffer from the illness which led to his death, one symptom of which was a severe headache (t.n).

[395] An agreed-upon hadith, the wording being that of Muslim, 7:131.

[396] This hadithis narrated by Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, and Imam Ahmad in his Musnad; a similar account is narrated by Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah from a hadith on the authority of A'ishah and Abu Hurayrah. In addition to these, there is a hadith narrated by Muslim and by Malik in al-Muwatta' under the heading "Ritual Purity" on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, may God be pleased with him, according to which the Messenger of God (pbuh) went to the graveyard and said, "Peace be upon you, O House of Believers. We hope, God willing, to join you. I only wish I could have seen our brethren." To which they replied, "O Messenger of God, are we not your brethren?" "Rather, you are my companions," he (pbuh) said. Some may mistakenly believe that the hadithis narrated by Muslim and Malik is the same account narrated by others concerning the imminence of the Prophet's death, only in a differing form. However, this is not necessarily the case, since it is an established fact that it was his (pbuh) custom to go out every night to make supplication and ask God's forgiveness for those buried in the al-Baqi' cemetery in Medina.

[397] This hadith is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd; a similar account is found in a long hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad.

[398] Such passages include, for example, the last two chapters of the Qur'an, Falaq 113, "The Rising Dawn," and al-Nas 114, "People" (t.n).

[399] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[400] Up to this point, this is an agreed-upon hadith, the wording being that of Muslim.

[401] A reference to the pool in Paradise from which the Prophet (pbuh) will give his people to drink (t.n).

[402] An agreed-upon hadith.

[403] This hadith is narrated by Muslim under the heading, "The Merit of Abu Bakr" (7:110); a similar account is narrated by al-Bukhari.

[404] This account is narrated by al-Bukhari under the heading, "The Prophet's Illness and Death" (5:138).

[405] An agreed-upon hadith.

[406] This hadith is narrated by al-Bukhari in his section on "Prayer" under the heading, "He who prays beside the prayer leader due to some infirmity," by Muslim in his section on "Prayer" under the heading, "The Appointment of a New Prayer Leader," by Malik in al-Muwatta' in his section on "Congregational Prayer" under the heading, "The Prayer Leader's Performance of Prayer While Seated," and by others as well. It is odd that Shaykh Nasir, in his commentary on the hadiths contained in al-Ghazali's book, Fiqh al-Sirah, attributes this account only to Imam Ahmad and Ibn Majah. Not only this, but he notes that some judge this to be a weak hadith because its chain of narrators includes Abu Ishaq al-Subay'i, even though it is an agreed-upon hadith which has reached us through chains of transmission besides the one he chooses for discussion. One possible reason for his focus on Imam Ahmad's and Ibn Majah's version is that it includes the phrase, "and he commenced (his recitation) from the verse which Abu Bakr had reached," whereas this phrase does not appear in the account narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari. Be that as it may, it remains the same incident and the same hadith, and when one is engaged in interpreting such a narrative, he must

not limit himself to mentioning only those chains of transmission which are weak rather than also discussing those which are sound and agreed upon, since otherwise, he falls into ambiguities which hadith scholars would do well to avoid.

[407] An agreed-upon hadith.

[408] An agreed-upon hadith.

[409] Narrated by both Muslim and al-Bukhari.

[410] This hadith is narrated by al-Bukhari under the heading, "The Illness and Death of the Messenger of God (pbuh)", and in his section on "Slaves" under the heading, "The Pangs of Death" (7:192). Al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, and Imam Ahmad narrate it with a different chain of transmission; moreover, rather than the words, "and with death comes affliction," their narrative reads, "O God, help me bear the affliction of death." Shaykh Nasir states, "This hadith, which is weak, was narrated by al-Tirmidhi and others on the authority Musá Ibn Sarjis Ibn Muhammad, on the authority of A'ishah..." However, it is weak only in the version which contains this particular wording. As for the original hadith, it is narrated by al-Bukhari with a sound chain of transmission. As pointed out in a previous note, if a hadith has two chains of transmission, it merely causes confusion only to make mention of the weaker of the two. Moreover, so long as it is clear that both versions deal with the same event, minor discrepencies are no cause for concern.

[411] Bukh–Narrated by alari.

[412] A siwak is a small stick, the tip of which is softened by chewing, which is used to clean and polish the teeth (t.n).

[413] Narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari, the wording being that of al-Bukhari.

[414] Narrated by al-Bukhari.

[415] This hadith is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and others; it is also included by al-Bukhari, with minor differences in wording.

[416] Tarikh al-Tabari, 3:22.

[417] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 14:118.

[418] See Ibid., 14:169, and Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, 10:152.

[419] Commentary on al-Shifa' by al-Qadi 'Iyad, 4:278-279; see also al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 14:174.

[420] Bracts are specialized leaves, situated either around or at the base of an inflorescence or flower cluster (t.n).

[421] See al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 14:175.

[422] Al-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim, 5:13-14.

[423] See Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 6:301.

[424] An abridged version of the account is found in al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 6:304ff.

[425] This account, which is taken from hadiths on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar and A'ishah, may God be pleased with them, is narrated by Ibn Kathir in al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah.

[426] This is a summary of the accounts related in al-Tabari, 3:343ff., Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 6:343ff., and al-Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa', 67.

[427] See Tarikh al-Tabari, 3:428, and Ibn al-Jawzi, Sirat 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, 36.

[428] Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:18.

[429] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:81, and Tarikh al-Tabari, 2:435.

[430] Ibid.

[431] The ancient Emesa, located in central Syria (t.n).

[432] A city adjacent to al-Basrah (t.n).

[433] The tarawih prayers, which are a special feature of the month of Ramadan, are performed after the final evening prayer and consist of between eight and twenty cycles of prayer (rak'ahs), the cycles being performed in pairs of two, with a short break between each pair and the one which follows it (t.n).

[434] Tarikh al-Tabari, 3:598 and 613.

[435] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:107, and Nahj al-Balaghah, 203.

[436] Tarikh al-Khulafa', 123ff.

[437] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:137, and Tarikh al-Khulafa', 124.

[438] For a detailed account of these events, see Tarikh al-Tabari, 4:190, and al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:137.

[439] This is an abridged version of the account given by Ibn Kathir in al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:147.

[440] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:81.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Tarikh al-Khulafa', 145, and al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:153.

[443] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:167, and Tarikh al-Tabari, 4:333.

[444] A spot located between Medina and Mecca (t.n).

[445] This is a reference to the army which was sent to Tabuk, so called because the people were called out to fight at the time of the severest heat and drought; it was also the season in which Medina's dates were ripe and its shade the most inviting (t.n).

[446] These are the three days after the feast of sacrifice at Minà during the major pilgrimage (the 11th –13th of Dhu al-Hijjah). Although these three days follow the conclusion of the pilgrimage, pilgrims are nevertheless expected to rest in Mecca during this time while the blood of their sacrifices dries up.

[447] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:167.

[448] Ibid., 7:171.

[449] Ibid., 7:234ff.

[450] Ibid., 235 and Fath al-Bari, 12:46.

[451] Ibid., 7:239.

[452] Tarikh al-Tabari, 4:506, and Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:240.

[453] Al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 7:241.

[454] Ibid, 7:254.

[455] Ibid., 7:260.

[456] Ibid, 7:282 and 284, abridged.

[457] That is, those who had declared themselves in rebellion against 'Ali, the word "Kharijite" being derived from the Arabic root kharaja, which means to defect, or go out from (t.n).

[458] Tarikh al-Tabari, 5:133ff., and al-Bidayah wa-al-Nihayah, 5:385ff.

[459] That is, the Kindhearted, Pure One (t.n).

[460] 'Uthman first married Ruqayyah; following Ruqayyah's death, he took Umm Kulthum as his wife (t.n).

[461] An interjection expressing anger or displeasure (t.n).

[462] The account of Bilal's visit to the Prophet's tomb is narrated by Ibn 'Asakir with a good chain of transmission, by Malik in al-Muwatta' on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, and by Imam Ahlmad on the authority of Abu Ayyub.

[463] There is a group of hadiths dealing with the merits of visiting his (pbuh) tomb, most of which suffer from some degree of weakness. Although, taken together, these hadiths may be taken as reliable textual evidence, we have chosen not to cite them in this context lest those opposed to the point of view I am espousing exploit them as a means of arguing in favor of Ibn Taymiyah's position, irregular as it is.

[464] The Rawdah, literally, "garden," is a reference to a hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) stated, "Between my tomb (or my house) and my pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise." This hadith is generally interpreted to mean that standing in this spot is like standing in one of the gardens of Paradise (t.n).